



THE AUTHOR

# AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

SIXTY-TWO YEARS  
OF SAILORS' EVOLUTION

By

Lieutenant-Commander

Henry D. Capper, O.B.E., R.N.

(Late '*The Man Behind the Gun*')  

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*With a Preface by*

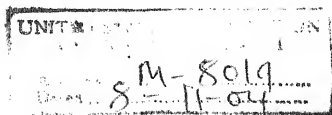
Admiral of the Fleet

Earl Jellicoe of Scapa

G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., LL.D., etc.

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## TO MY WIFE

WHOSE SWEETNESS OF DISPOSITION HAS MADE HOME  
DELIGHTFUL ; AND WHOSE UNFLAGGING INTEREST  
AND SUPPORT, ALWAYS GIVEN ME IN EVERY  
ENTERPRISE, HAVE MADE POSSIBLE ANY  
LITTLE SUCCESS IN MY LIFE





A PREFACE BY  
ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET  
EARL JELLICOE OF SCAPA  
G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., LL.D., ETC.

*80 Portland Place, W.I.*

LEUTENANT-Commander Capper in this interesting volume writes of the conditions existing in the Navy, and of life on the Lower Deck in the latter half of the last century, and shows how those conditions have altered for the better to-day.

He writes also of the vast improvement that has taken place in the prospects of the men and boys entering the Navy to-day, in regard to reaching the rank of commissioned officer.

He tells the reader too of his own connection with the successful efforts made to improve the condition of Warrant Officers in the Navy, as well as that of those in the lower ranks.

Every naval officer realizes the value of the vast majority of the changes brought about during the last fifty years, and those of us who saw the Navy in the bygone years of which the author writes can appreciate to the full the great benefits which have resulted from those changes.

That they have brought no diminution in the fighting spirit of the personnel in the Royal Navy was amply demonstrated during the late war.

In writing appreciatively of the work carried out on board of H.M. ships by the Warrant Officers, the

## A PREFACE BY EARL JELLICOE

Author certainly voices the opinion of senior officers of the Navy. I have personally always regarded their work with the greatest admiration, and it is a real pleasure to bear testimony in these pages to their unswerving loyalty and devotion to duty, and to emphasize the very happy relations which have always existed between officers of Warrant and Commissioned rank in the ships in which I have served.

JELLICOE,  
ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

AS it is 'The Navy, whereon, under the good Providence of God, the wealth, safety, and strength of the Kingdom doth chiefly depend', I feel that everything relating to the evolution of the senior service should be of interest to 'all true-hearted Englishmen', as the Elizabethans used to say.

Landsmen are apt to take for granted the value of the Royal Navy, and not to carry in their minds any clear picture of the day-by-day lives of the officers and men who serve therein; therefore the memories of a long connection with the senior service may be of interest, not only to readers on shore, but also to naval men of the past era with whom the writer may have served, as also those of the present generation to whom the customs and habits of a quite recent past are in the modern fleet but dim traditions.

My first recollection of men-o'-warships was as a child clinging in terror to my mother's skirts, as a crowd of seamen, just paid off after a long foreign commission, were holding a posse of police at bay in the generally quiet street in which we lived.

The police had a very rough time, for, as well as being greatly outnumbered, and armed only with the long truncheons then carried (which were useless under the circumstances, as they were separated from the sailors by heaps of stones and earth and by a deep chasm in the middle of the road, where

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE .

the first drainage system of Portsmouth was being laid), they were opposed to men of great agility and daring, provided too with ample ammunition from the stone heaps before them. The policemen's high hats with shiny tops were attractive targets, and it was not long before the larger number of that force was bareheaded. At that time I little thought it would be my lot to join the ranks of these uproarious belligerents then fighting against the forces of law and order.

Terrifying to my youthful mind as was this scene, subsequent exhibitions of paid-off sailors which I witnessed in Portsea near the dockyard gates were even more disgraceful. I well remember the exploits of one ship's company paid off at that port in 1864. They engaged every available cab in the town and formed these up in procession on Common Hard. With each man was his 'long-haired chum'—generally a woman of the town. The cabs were decorated with flags and pennants, each box seat holding one or more men and women, a similar number being mounted on the roof. A few men were astride horses, and two of these to show their independence sat facing the tails of their beasts, which were towed in the procession by lines to the horse or cab next ahead. This procession went, accompanied by the tooting of horns and the strains of chanties sung to fiddle accompaniments, to some of the villages surrounding Portsmouth, Fareham or Botley, where unreportable orgies took place. Then the next day the Police Courts were packed

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

with peccant members of the procession who, in 'painting the town red', had broken the law.

All this disgraceful uproar of that day was due to two causes, for both of which the Admiralty was responsible. These were, first, the stupid system under which wages were withheld throughout long commissions, and then, secondly, liberating the men, who had been serving for years in the thrall of discipline savage and cruel in its severity, to sudden freedom, with pockets full of money, thus to be the ready prey of landsharks of both sexes.

Joining the Navy at the bottom of the ladder when many of these evils and abuses were still unredressed, I have witnessed the continuous rising of the men in self-respect, self-reverence and mental efficiency, from the lowest dregs of the community to a relatively high social position; this—as Authority noticed their improvement in habits, and was supported by public opinion—has little by little relaxed the system which dealt with the men as beasts.

By steady and continuous steps these have emancipated themselves from the shackles, and in spite of many difficulties, have educated themselves to a standard of mental value and service usefulness, which, added to their proverbial adaptability and handiness, has made of the fleetmen of to-day a body which is the very cream of the working classes of this country, and one of which the nation should be proud as its first line of defence.

Further, as the Admiralty has learned to handle fleetmen as men, it has discovered that there are as

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

good brains before as abaft the mast, so that while in my early days there had not been a warrant officer or man advanced to a commission for half a century—in the way that Admiral Benbow and Captain James Cook had been promoted, although over a million men had passed through the fleet meantime—to-day, because of what Authority has learned, there are close upon three thousand naval officers of 'hawsehole origin' on the active and retired lists, who are, or have been, performing fine quarter-deck service for their country. This forms such an incentive to ambitious and loyal men as naturally brings into the senior service an ever more able (and socially as well as mentally) higher type of candidate to increase the value of the Navy to the country.

Having taken some small share in this great, if peaceful, evolution in the character of naval personnel, from the days of rule by the 'cat' and by terror, to these of kindly encouragement and thoughtful consideration by Authority, I feel that these records of over sixty years' association with continuous progress in the Royal Navy may appeal to the public.

H. D. C.

*Bishopstone, Nr. Herne Bay.*

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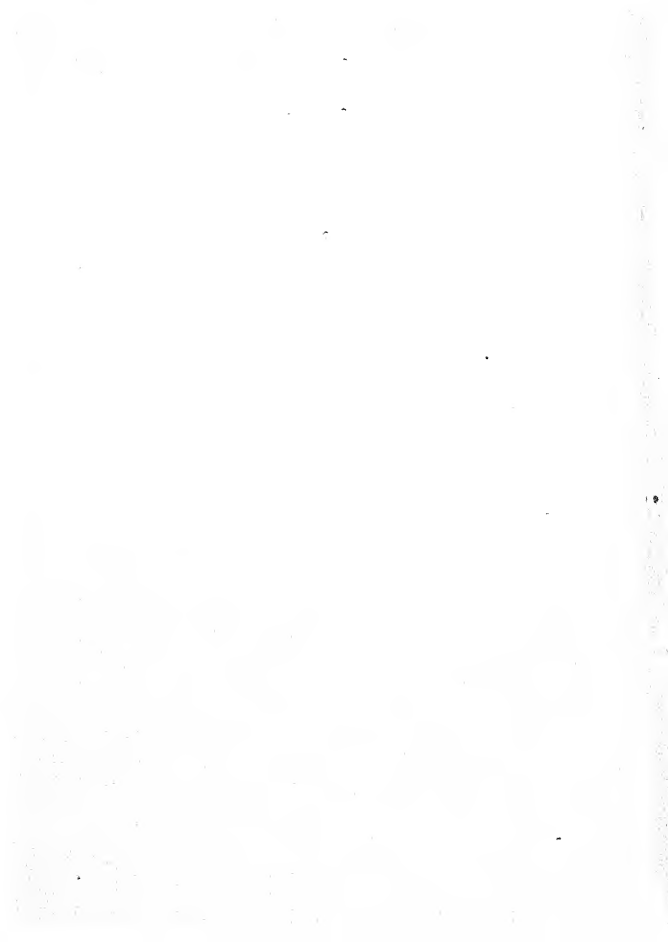
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## CHAPTER I

### AT THE HAWSEHOLE

*'For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,  
Action, nor utterance, nor power of speech  
To stir men's blood.*

*I only speak right on.'*

JULIUS CAESAR.

I WAS born in 1855 at Portsmouth, my father holding a responsible post in the dockyard there. He came of good stock, a Capper having fought as a knight at Agincourt, and whose estate was a manor in East Kent ; the old mansion is still standing.

On his side of the family his relatives were mainly Army men (both Imperial and Indian), and in my own generation at least two cousins have been distinguished general officers. He possessed an excellent library, and before his death, when I was under ten years of age, I had devoured numbers of volumes, such as Rollin's *Ancient History*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Rollin's Empire*, *The History of Rome*, and *The History of Greece*, as well as many works by Smollett, Marryat, Fielding, and others which to-day I should hesitate to allow a son of mine to read. As a fact, their coarse phraseology passed me without harm ensuing.

My mother's people were connected with the Navy : two of my cousins were executive officers, while three of their sisters married naval officers ; so

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

that when, later, I was serving at sea as a sailor boy, I had relatives who were executives, engineers, accountants, and one parson in the fleet.

When my father died in 1865, his chief in the dockyard, the late Mr. Cradock, last of the Master Shipwrights, took me into his office as messenger; and then, later, when the shipwrights had to turn their hands to work in metals as composite ships were being built, I was sent out as a rivet boy so as to earn more money. At that time the system was to make what was termed 'a set' composed of two shipwrights, one labourer and two boys. The three former worked at setting up the bulkhead plates with temporary screws and nuts until enough were in place to permit of 'the set' riveting them up by task work, being paid by results, and for long we were able to earn double wages. While this setting up was in progress, however, the boys, after assembling a stock of rivets, coal, etc., had plenty of time to play.

The dockyards were then very leisurely establishments, and some of my gang of boys occupied their spare time by climbing to the high roofs of the covered docks, and on the flat between the gables of two docks we constructed a very roomy and comfortable cabin, furnished with table, chairs, and pictures, and with even a sofa, these being taken from one of the ships under repair. There we had a royal

## AT THE HAWSEHOLE

time. Another method\* was to rig a trapeze from the beams of the ship under construction and exercise ourselves upon that.

During the four years I served in Portsmouth yard, there were two or three events which stand out sharply in my memory. I remember seeing the three-decker *Victoria* sailed into harbour and brought alongside the watering jetty without aid of tugs, the Admiral standing on the poop as she was brought alongside. Another event was an acquaintance made with the late Mr. Jeans, the author of the Logarithmic Tables used in the Navy. He had been a close friend of my father, and had originally been a working miner. The third incident I recall was the appearance of the first of the great white Indian troopers, the *Malabar*. She came alongside the Pitch House jetty and embarked a Scots regiment, the jetty being crammed with interested sightseers, drawn by such a fine vessel, so great an improvement on the *Himalaya*, *Tamar*, and other transports of the day.

After four years of this easy service—for easy it was in that period—I was one day enjoying myself on a trapeze in the *Danae* with another boy when a strange gentleman arrayed in the orthodox London costume, with high hat, spats, etc., called me and inquired my name. He also asked my age and employment. Then he politely requested me to take

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
a note to the Cashier (also 'a friend of my father's). When I arrived at that gentleman's office and delivered the visiting-card on which the message was written, Mr. Richards asked me if I knew what it was.

'No,' I replied, 'I did not read it.'

'Well, sonny,' he said, 'I'm sorry for you and your mother, but this is an order to pay you off and discharge you for being under age. I'll see Mr. W. B. Robinson and do what I can for you, but I'm afraid you'll have to go. He has been sent here as Chief Constructor and Engineer by Mr. Childers to carry out economies.'<sup>1</sup>

I was duly discharged as under age after four years' service! After about a year of very difficult times, during which I became fully aware of my mother's great struggle to keep a home together for her five children (I was youngest but one), I threw the traditions of the family to the winds and entered as a boy on board the *St. Vincent* training ship, determined to rise to officer's rank alongside my cousins. Thus I was the first member of the family

<sup>1</sup> I was one of the three smallest boys selected to paint with red lead inside the first iron masts received at Portsmouth (for the frigate *Glasgow*). We worked in half-hour spells, a rope tied to our feet to haul us out in case the fumes overcame us. The illuminant used was a rushlight in a horn lantern, the only one then allowed in the yard, except colza moderator lamps and wax candles in the offices.

## AT THE HAWSEHOLE

to enter at the hawsehole, and was not loved by my relatives for so doing.

Life as a training-ship boy was very different in 1869 to what it is to-day, for neither in regard to food, emoluments, or privileges, did it bear any comparison with the Shotley and *Impregnable* routine in 1926.

The old tradition from press-gang times was observed, and each Boatswain's Mate carried a 'tickler' to accelerate the boys in their drills. The ship's Corporals also were never without their canes, and were liberal in their use: but although these and other arrangements were harsh, yet we were a happy lot, and particularly appreciated was the privilege of being allowed to run aloft anywhere over the yards in spare time. The instructors were picked petty officers, and certainly in my time were an excellent and steady body of most respectable men. We were taught to make, mend, and laundry our clothes, and it was remarkable—and an experience I subsequently verified when an instructing officer myself fifteen years later—that the poorer and less cared for the boy on entry, the better he responded in regard to care of uniform, personal cleanliness, etc., as compared with well-to-do lads who, previous to joining, had never had to clean their own boots.

After some eight months' service we were sent in batches to the brig *Martin*, a beautiful little sailing



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE craft attached to the ship, in which each batch was taken for short sea trips and taught practically how to handle sails. She was armed with 3-pdr. guns (the same armament as Lord Cochrane had in the *Speedy*, when he attacked the *Gama* frigate and captured her with less than a sixth of the number in her crew). I recall that the main hardship in the *Martin*—it was in February and March—was the morning bath. Her iron baths were placed two a side under the open fo'c'sle, were filled overnight, and in the morning the first few in had to break the ice. (There were four baths and eighty boys, and one filling sufficed !)

After our return to the *St. Vincent*, the boys who had thus 'been to sea' gave themselves some airs, and on one occasion there was trouble because we thought we had been unfairly treated, having our leave stopped one Wednesday (liberty) afternoon. As a punishment we were ordered to knots and splices instruction ; and I recall that the petty officer, whose name was Pontin, was a very sympathetic, if quite determined, man.

Seeing we were seething with a sense of wrong, he kept us in hand until the officers had gone away ; then, to our amazement, instead of giving us knots and splices to make, he very deliberately commenced to take off his jumper, 'white frock' and flannel, and then, thus stripped to the waist, he suddenly

## AT THE HAWSEHOLE

turned round with his back to the unruly class. Across his back, and particularly on the right side, were livid blue stripes from the shoulders to the waist with scarcely an inch here and there of healthy skin.

'Boys,' he said, 'see my back? That is where I was twice flogged with the cat. The first time because I told an officer he was unfair to me, *and he was*; the second time because I would not give a messmate away who had made a noise aloft. Now, take an old man's advice, and while you are in the Navy do as the printed rules tell you: "Obey all orders implicitly"! ' No one replied, but a very chastened group was afterwards sent aloft to see how sails were bent and furled; nor did I, for one, ever forget that practical lesson in discipline.

Rated first-class boys at the end of a year, our 'term' was sent to the *Excellent* gunnery ship, where we learnt only gunnery and care of our messes; while with enlarged liberty we looked forward to being sent to sea.

When our gunnery course was completed, there was a demand for boys to join the Flying Squadron for a world trip. It was commanded by Admiral Campbell, who was known as an opponent of steam propulsion. His squadron consisted of the *Narcissus*, *Immortalite*, and the *Topaz*, wooden frigates; *Inconstant*, the crack new steel frigate, the very first of her class, and the *Volage*, iron steam corvette.

## CHAPTER II

### BLUE WATER

*'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, and not having been at sea.'*

DR. JOHNSON.

IT was my good fortune to be sent to the *Inconstant* (Captain Waddalove), and, like all her ship's company, I look back after fifty-five years with affection to service in this very fine vessel.

The itinerary was a wide one : Plymouth, Vigo, Lisbon, Madeira, Rio de Janeiro, Cape of Good Hope, Bombay ; returning by Mauritius, Simons Town, Ascension, St. Helena, Cape de Verde, and thence to Portsmouth. The greater part of this was done under sail—the trip from Rio to the Cape occupying ninety-seven days—and during this time we were able to sample the varying qualities of the two types of seamen who then manned the fleet.

There were, as from 1833, a constantly increasing number of seaman gunners who were trained continuous service men ; their numbers were being slowly augmented from the boys (whose training system dated back only to the years of the Crimean War). But these, in the early 'seventies, were insufficient in number to man ships fully even when so-called 'general service seamen' (who were continuous service men, not seamen gunners) were added. The balance of the crew were non-con-

## BLUE WATER

tinuous service men who were recruited by the Captain through the good offices of Mrs. Wafer, who kept a public-house near the dockyard gates called 'The R.N. Rendezvous', and here men who sometimes went to sea in warships and sometimes in merchant craft forgathered and were recruited.

They were distinctly a socially inferior type to the regular service man who was working for a pension, but undoubtedly the best seamen and the most daring men aloft in the ship. One old hand, who had been on and off with Captain Waddalove for a half-century, had held all ratings, and indeed had been twice warranted as a Boatswain, but reduced; Tom Huntingdon was a rascal, but the finest practical sailor on board. He was rated Chief Quartermaster, and must have been 70 years of age.

Old as Huntingdon was, he was as agile aloft as any man in the ship—and that means much, for it was not at all an unusual thing, when ceremonial manning yards was being carried out, for an upper yard man to stand voluntarily on the truck of each royal mast—some 220 feet from the deck, the truck being only some eight inches in diameter—and I have seen this frequently done by men when skylarking aloft.

Discipline was strict, and those who were mostly in trouble were these non-continuous men, particularly after a spell of leave on shore. So well was

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

this understood that when forty-eight hours' shore leave expired a whip was rigged at the quarter of the main yard to hoist the 'drunks' on board; and these men were allowed to lie about in the scuppers for five or six hours to sleep off their debauch without notice being taken, so long as they then quietly 'turned to' their work. Thus, when the ship was ordered to sea shortly after the expiration of leave, such men would still be slumbering in the scuppers with damp swabs for their pillows.

Yet punishment warrants were numerous, though in that ship the cat was never used in my time.

One event stands out in my memory. When the ship was at the Cape homeward bound, a private of Marines was tried by court-martial for striking his superior officer with a weapon. He was found guilty and sentenced to fourteen years' hard labour on the Cape Town breakwater. His offence was as follows: On return of his watch from shore after forty-eight hours' leave, he was ordered by a Sergeant to lend a hand in getting up ashes, a job which should have been given to someone of the other watch. When he expostulated, both Sergeant and man lost their tempers, and the former taunted him, declaring he had had relations with the private's wife, and would again as soon as the ship reached home. Exasperated at this, the private made a lunge

## BLUE WATER

at the Sergeant with a gun lever he was holding, and for this offence received the cruel sentence.

When the man was brought up in the presence of the ship's company, and his sentence read, the Captain ordered his badges and the regimental buttons to be cut off his uniform, and then, according to a custom which then obtained, commenced to point a moral as to the enormity of his crime. Fiercely the man broke in and shouted :

‘ Captain Waddalove ! If you are a gentleman, don't strike a man when he's down. If the Admiral had taunted you that your wife was his w——e wouldn't you have downed him as I did this white-livered Sergeant as did that to me ? If I live to find him after fourteen years in prison, I'll give him a civilian's dose, and so would you ! Now let me go, you have no right to add to the punishment. I'll suffer that like a man ! ’

It is scarcely necessary to add that that Sergeant made an application a day or two afterwards to be transferred to another ship, and unless he had gone there is some probability he would have been dropped overboard some dark night.

At both the Cape and Bombay the crews of the ships were entertained, and all had a splendid time, which made up for the incessant sail drill which kept us going at sea and in harbour, and which was (alas !) too often punctuated by the death or disable-

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
ment of some man or boy who fell from aloft while  
it was in progress.

One or two incidents in that happy commission  
stand out sharply in my memory.

When the studding sails were set it was the rule  
to keep some of the upper yardmen and the midship-  
man of the top aloft, to be ready to trim or take in  
these light sails.

Now the ships' and officers' galley was placed on  
the main deck abaft the foremast, with a large  
hatchway above it, always open in fine weather.  
One night when we had been long at sea and the  
shore provisions all gone—no canteens in those days  
—I was sent down from the top with directions to  
stand by the galley and when an opportunity occurred  
the top-gallant reeving line (a small rope with a  
hook in the end) would be paid down to me from  
the top. I was to hook this in the handle of the  
ward-room stock-pot and signal, then to make my  
way up to the top at once.

All occurred according to plan, and by the time I  
reached the top a steaming mess had been turned  
out of the stock-pot, condiments added by the Mid-  
shipman, and each with a biscuit or two, the 'stun-  
sail watch' had a royal feed, while the ward-room  
officers went short of soup for their dinner. That  
Midshipman is now a retired Admiral.

One of the prime factors in keeping the men in

## BLUE WATER

the low social scale which was then common to them was the custom which then obtained of paying wages only once in six months. On these occasions each man was given a printed form showing the charges against his pay. It was called a Slop List. Thus 'Wages due' was the first item, and detailed under 'mulcts' were 'slops, charges, and arrears', and finally 'soap, tobacco, and religious books'. As large numbers of the men were illiterate (most of the boys made a little money by writing letters for these, and reading their correspondence) they could not understand these items, particularly the last, which was really the end of a system under which the men provided the pay of the Chaplain, and much ignorant grouching was the consequence.

Naturally, with so much money in hand, when forty-eight hours' leave was given a lot of it was squandered in sailor fashion; nor was there then, as there is now, any facility for transferring by remittance through the Paymaster these surplus funds to their homes.

The only method for saving was by means of allotting half-pay to someone at home, and apart from a few of the steadier men, seamen gunners, etc., this system had terrors of its own, for, taking advantage of the long foreign commissions which were then the rule, women of the town (the 'Polls' and 'Sues' of Dibden) would contract marriage



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
with two, or in some cases even four, men with whom successively they had been associated, and from all of these they would be in receipt of half-pay.

In the *Inconstant* was an A.B. who was a clever needleman in the difficult art of cap-making, earning a considerable amount in this way.<sup>1</sup> At Bombay another man joined for passage to England, also an expert, and they united forces in this work. On reaching England each had a handy sum saved to hand over to their wives. They landed on leave together, and only then learned that their wives lived in the same street, and same house. Each then discovered his wife to be one and the same woman, at that moment in association with a marine from another ship, to whom also she was married.

It was largely due to the investigations made by the late Miss Agnes Weston, and her representations to the Admiralty, that by simple alterations in the methods of payment in the dockyards this scandalous method of preying on seamen became impossible.

Some allusion should be made to the food then supplied. It is true that the special rating, borne for shifting old salt beef and salt pork from one barrel to another and washing the brine before re-casking, had been abolished. He was called the 'Shifter'. But the custom remained, and often casks were opened which gave off so offensive a

<sup>1</sup> Men then made and provided uniform at their own expense.

## BLUE WATER

smell as to permeate the ship. It was no uncommon thing to open casks which from their labels showed that the contents had been over twenty-five years in pickle, and from raw beef of this character—difficult as it was to eat—capital little snuff-boxes could be manufactured, which, when dry, would bear as high a polish as mahogany.

On going to sea each lower deck mess was permitted to take one sack of potatoes, calavances, or flour, and when these had been consumed nothing but the Navy ration remained. The biscuit was then supplied in bags,<sup>1</sup> and when fresh was most palatable, if hard ; but very shortly after receipt on board was infested with weevils and worms, and in a very short time was largely sour grit and insects.

It was the job of the boy of the morning watch to go below and prepare a dish of kedgerree, made from the dust of the biscuits moistened with water and covered with slush which the cook had skimmed from the boiling pork. The dish was put in the oven and lightly baked until the top was browned, and was then esteemed a luxury.

Salt beef and pork, and fresh beef cooked for dinner ; all the pieces (which were approximately 8 or 4 lb. in weight) were turned out into a large open tub, the same into which in turn the cocoa for breakfast and tea for supper was run out. With

<sup>1</sup> Biscuit is now supplied in hermetically sealed tins.

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

his back to the tub a boy was stationed, and under his arm was the blade of an oar. The steward read out the number of pounds for each mess in succession as the men came up in queue, and the petty officers of the day then handed up the piece upon which the oar blade happened to rest, thus dealing fairly by all hands.

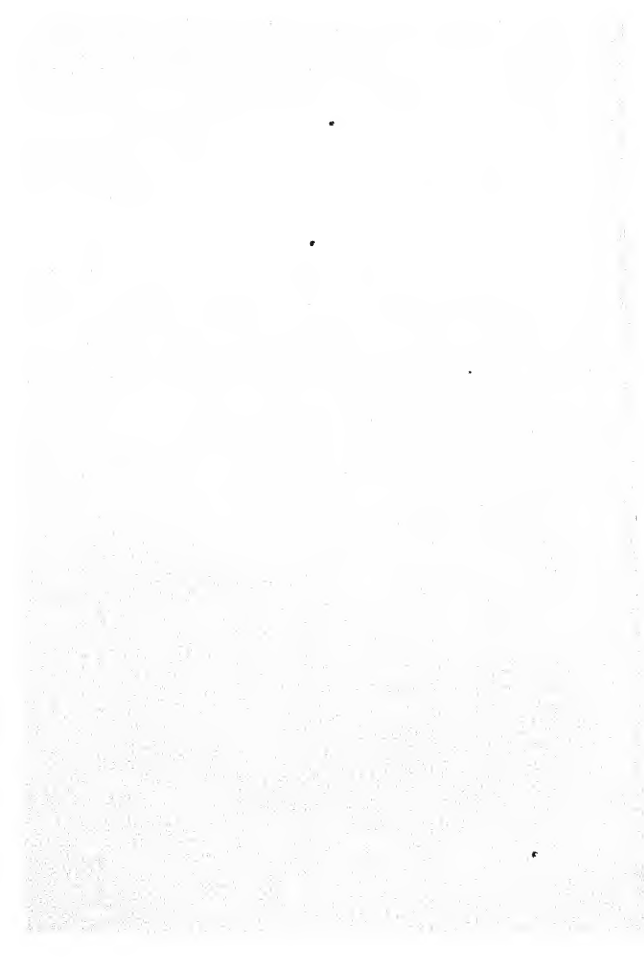
Bad as was the food, cooking was worse. There was no qualified cook in the whole Navy for the foremast men. These officials were then supplied from the inmates of Greenwich Hospital, and as it was impossible to send physically fit men, as the only Greenwich pensioners who answered to this description were very old, it followed that the qualification for ship's cook was the loss of an eye or a limb.

In my career, I was shipmate with three of these veterans, and can bear witness that none could, or indeed desired to, cook; but for fluent blasphemy each of these chief petty officers were far and away the most accomplished linguists on board. It must, however, be added in their favour that, with the aid of an ordinary seaman, they were expected to cook for the 750 men in complement.

There was one exception to salt meals at sea, which was provided by a description of preserved fresh beef supplied in 8 lb. tins. It had been placed raw in the tins with about its own bulk of water,



A CHIEF PETTY OFFICER, IN 1870  
[SPECIALLY DRAWN FOR THIS WORK BY  
MISS M. B. LAPHORNE]



## BLUE WATER

and then horribly overcooked by steam, sealed down, and when issued with dry potatoes was the most indigestible meal possible to conceive. In one tin opened on the Cape Station the finger of a woman was found, and as about that time a girl named Fanny Adams had been murdered, this food was at once thus named. Moreover, as the tins in which it was supplied were, when fitted with lids and handles by the ship's armourers, most useful utensils for drawing the allowance of grog, these were named fannys, and small cans are so called till to-day.

There were no canteens then, nor had we in that ship any steward or petty officer who bought and retailed such comestibles as sardines. Indeed, the modern method of preserving milk, jams, and meats had not been invented, and so far as I remember, sardines, Keiller's marmalade, and milk preserved in powder, were the only available items; and as the officers' messes were not much better off except for the live stock, sheep, pigs, and fowls, which they took to sea, no one grumbled much at what to-day would be considered as existing on food unfit for human consumption.

Drill aloft occurred every evening after quarters except on Saturdays and Sundays, and commencing at 5, was often protracted, in some cases lasting to 6.30. Now the 'duty men', i.e. quartermasters, bo'sun's mates, sentries, and ship's corporals, with

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helm and look-out men for the first dog watch—  
4 to 6 p.m.—had their ‘supper’, that is the evening  
meal of tea and biscuit, at 3.30 (seven bells), ready  
for duty at 4 o’clock.

But the ship’s cook was not provided with any  
utensil in which tea could be made for issue to this  
relatively small number of men, while the raw tea  
and sugar was not issued to the messes, but in bulk  
to the cook. Thus, before 3.30 the tea for the  
ship’s company was made by throwing the proper  
quantity for all hands into the copper of boiling  
water, and there, after the issue to duty men, it  
remained (stewing if the fires had not been quickly  
drawn) until the drill evolution was completed.

Hence it followed that tea when consumed was  
of the colour of ink, with a particularly bitter  
flavour.

One other interesting recollection: When the  
Squadron was making long trips at sea under sail  
it was customary for the two lines to close in to a  
cable distance in the second dog watch—from 6 to  
8 p.m.; and then a concert was held. One man  
would sing a song or a chanty, and all the five ships’  
companies joined in the choruses. A pleasant and  
thrilling effect as the hundreds of voices rolled over  
the water. On Sunday evenings such hymns as  
‘Abide with me’, ‘Eternal Father’, and ‘At even  
ere the sun was set’, were sung, while the close

## BLUE WATER

was always the Old Hundredth, ' All people that on earth do dwell '.

My recollection of the officers is that all were popular, and there was an atmosphere of content on board in spite of hard living and strenuous work. Possibly this may have, in some measure, been due to the immense influence exerted by the Chaplain, Rev. C. J. Corfe (afterwards first Bishop of Korea), who was as much at home eating pea soup in the lower-deck messes as in the ward-room. Everyone's friend, trusted and loved by all, no one in trouble but found a wise guide and sympathetic counsellor in him, while his cabin was the sanctum of any who wished to study.

Upon the ship paying off, I, with other boys who were abstainers (a very meagre number in those days), joined the new Order of Good Templars, which had just made its appearance in Portsmouth, an event which had far-reaching consequences in my own case, and it was in this connection I became acquainted with Miss Agnes Weston, then about 32 years of age, my friendship with that great lady lasting until her death in October, 1918.

We were kept in the old depot ship, *Duke of Wellington*, for some three months, forming a small party of the 3,000 odd men and boys crowded into the accommodation provided for the regular crew of 1,000 of that unhealthy craft, where the total lack



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE of hygiene, methods for feeding, and berthing, for this far too numerous crowd of supernumeraries, formed the opportunity for dishonest members of the naval police to reap a rich harvest from the tips wrung from the men in return for the illicit privilege of landing and remaining on shore, out of the hell on board. One particular rating of this class accumulated sufficient money to permit him to sever his connection with the service and starting in business, first as a bumboat man, and later as a naval contractor, became a most prosperous and wealthy man from the capital amassed by this vile beginning.

Then, with a draft of other boys 'for disposal', I was transferred to the troopship *Orontes* for passage to the North American and West Indies Station. This was in January, 1873.

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### CHAPTER III

## THE IMPETUS

*'As a matter of brute fact, about half the trouble which is taken in this singular world is in helpfulness ; taken without hope of reward, or of advancement even, or for the most part even of recognition.'*

FATHER RONALD KNOX.

IT was during this voyage an incident occurred which determined me by hook or by crook to reach—and that as soon as possible—officer's rank.

Among the supernumerary Sub-Lieutenants was a cousin of mine. As a boy I naturally kept as far as possible away from him. One night, however, I was on the look-out on the fo'c'sle and my cousin was sent as officer forward. (In sailing ships the officer of the watch was aft.) Taking advantage of our being alone, I made a perfectly respectful remark to this young officer—only two years my senior in age—in regard to our common family affairs. He at once lost his temper and said :

'If you ever again have the presumption to address me except on duty I'll have you caned.'

He had but to report me for impertinence and that would have happened ! (I am glad to be able to add that from subsequent experience I have learned that his conduct on that occasion was not in accord with naval traditions.)

Anything I have since done—and it has been the main object of my life—to make possible the re-

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opening of an avenue for men from before the mast to rise to the quarter-deck, is due to the bitterness which resulted from this rebuff; and whatever the naval warrant officers owe to my efforts is really due to the caustic ill-manners of this young officer.

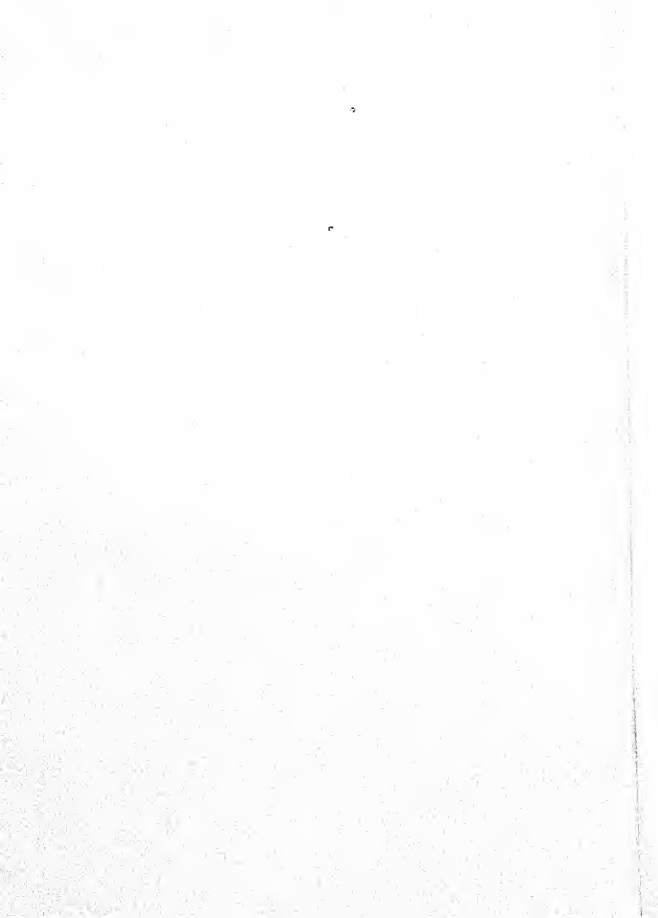
Arrived at Port Royal, I was discharged to the *Spartan* sloop (Captain J. S. Hudson, who when a Lieutenant commanding in China was attacked and shot at by his marine servant, who was tried and hanged at the yard-arm, the last man so sentenced in the Navy).

There were 272 men in complement, and very soon we began to induce other boys and young ordinary seamen to join the Good Templars: gaining first those who were total abstainers. It very soon appeared that the glamour of regalia and the quasi-secret society system of this Order brought numbers to our organization of higher ratings, and as it was a *sine qua non* that they must stop their grog, an appreciable effect was soon noticed in the punishment returns.

Of this we knew nothing: but one day, after being some six months on board, the First Lieutenant (R. W. Stopford, a very austere officer) sent for me to his cabin in the dinner hour; and although in a terrible funk at first, when he made me sit down and tell him all about the Good Templars I soon felt at ease, and my enthusiasm for



THE AUTHOR IN 1873  
(AGED 18)



## THE IMPETUS

the new Order made a palpable impression upon him.

What we needed to form a ship's Lodge was permission for all our party of both watches to land on the same night, instead of alternately. Lieutenant Stopford at once gave an order to the Master-at-Arms to arrange this, the petty officers being responsible that all returned at the proper time. This was unconventional, but was largely the reason that by the end of the first year more than half the ship's company and two officers were members. On board we held our meetings in store-rooms, or when not steaming, in the stokehold, causing quite a furore among all hands, but the cult was so much appreciated aft that a handsome cheque was sent us with which to purchase proper regalia. What was appreciated there was a fact the men themselves were not cognizant of, viz. that from 'the drunkenest ship in the Squadron' we had now reached the position of that of the vessel with the smallest punishment returns. The Admiral's attention was drawn to this remarkable fact, and several officers and men 'under a cloud' were sent to the *Spartan*, often with the happiest results.

On shore one made acquaintance, through the (then) popular G.T. Order, with folk of a higher social position than would otherwise have been

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

possible for seamen to aspire to, and many of these have been my lifelong correspondents and friends.

In recruiting members the most serious difficulty was the custom of 'the cook of the mess' to have a portion of the grog ration of his messmates. Of course recriminations often followed when the major number in the mess were 'T.T.' Also many men made a good deal of profit by selling their grog, and these two classes were naturally disgruntled by the constantly increasing numbers of the temperance party.

A few incidents which occurred while serving in this ship stand out sharply in my memory. One was when the late Lord Charles Beresford, then a Lieutenant, was placed on half-pay from the flagship to attend to his parliamentary duties: there being at the time an acute discussion on the question of abolition of 'the cat' in the Navy. There were still in several ships a number of the old class of non-continuous service men. Now, it practically devolved upon the petty officers to maintain discipline, and to many non-continuous men only fear of the cat appealed. So before Lord Charles departed a deputation of petty officers waited on him and asked him to use his influence so that under proper safeguards the Captains of ships might still have power to award this punishment in a very

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serious case, such as mutiny. Whether these representations had any effect I do not, of course, know ; but at any rate the cat was retained under these conditions until quite recent years.

Another incident was a difference of opinion between our Captain and the Commodore at Jamaica. We were ordered to cruise to Port Antonio, and were leaving the harbour under sail. As the sloop tacked under the stern of the *Aboukir*, the hulk which flew Commodore De Horsey's flag, that officer appeared upon her poop and, in the hearing of the ship's company, some exceedingly rude remarks were exchanged. From words Captain Hudson proceeded to deeds. As we tacked round the sharp point of the peninsula he caused the lee fore brace to be made fast several fathoms from where it should have passed the bitts as the yard was swung : consequently when, with all hands upon the weather brace, it was suddenly ' brought up ', the yard was sprung in the quarter and sagged down in its slings and the supporting rigging.

The signal was then made to the flagship, ' Permission to return to repair damages ', the reply was ' Proceed to carry out orders '. So we went to Port Antonio, and there the ship's carpenters most capably ' fished ' the yard, and it was retained in use for many months afterwards. But within the period of a couple of mails from England, Captain



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Hudson's application for half-pay was approved and his relief took over the command.

A story which is perfectly true concerning Sir Algernon De Horsey when he was Commodore at Port Royal is worth repeating. There had been some local unrest, and consequently a sentry<sup>1</sup> of the late West India Regiment was posted at the dockyard gates, his orders being to allow no one to pass without the password. One evening the Commodore landed from the ship outside the yard and went for a stroll to the Point. On his return to the yard in which his residence was situated he was challenged by the sentry, who demanded the password. Said Sir Algernon :

'I am Commodore De Horsey and do not know the password. Allow me to pass.'

The sentry had just before had an altercation with some junior officers bent on giving him trouble, so was indisposed for any further concession to anybody, and he replied :

'No, sar, not if you Commodore de donkey you no pass here widout de word', and that exalted officer had to walk into the barracks and see the guard officer before he could return to his home.

<sup>1</sup> I knew this man, a mulatto, personally, and have been amused by this story being related recently by two gallant Admirals, each wrongly attributing the locale: one to Bermuda and the other to Barbados.

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On two occasions during this commission the *Spartan* went to English Harbour, Antigua, to destroy the pest of cockroaches by fumigation of the ship ; and on each occasion the officers and men were accommodated in the empty storehouses on shore while the fumigation was in progress. I was among those berthed in a building, the top floor of which was lumbered up with packing-cases—many of them without lids—in which were the old records of the dockyard. The old coloured man who was caretaker of the place had no objection to these being overhauled by one or two of us who were interested in the history of this ancient establishment, and I spent a good many hours in browsing through the correspondence, to get glimpses of letters of Captain Horatio Nelson of H.M.S. *Boreas*, ' Senior Naval Officer ', thus whetting an appetite for detailed study of the life of this greatest of all naval commanders.

At Bermuda the blacks are as typically African to sight as is possible, but for some unknown reason their speech is as good as that of the whites. A favourite game to ' raise their dander ' was to accost them and ask in a friendly way, ' Excuse me, but do you speak English ? ' when sparks were sure to fly. At these beautiful islands there were then in circulation two British coins, the largest and the smallest I have ever seen ; the former was the dump, of copper, weighing about three ounces each and worth

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twopence ; the latter, also cōpper, the mite, eight of  
which went to a penny.

In 1874 orders were received for the *Spartan* to  
return to England and pay off. The new Captain  
sent for me one day to the quarter-deck, where I  
found him with Commander Compton Domville, who  
was Captain of the *Dryad*, a smaller sloop.

‘Here’s our temperance apostle, Domville’, said  
the former. ‘See what you can do with him’, and  
then went to his cabin.

Commander Domville was there to induce me to  
remain out and volunteer for his ship in the hope  
that what had been accomplished in regard to  
temperance in the *Spartan* might be similarly carried  
out in his smaller command. He made compli-  
mentary remarks as to what had been done and  
promised to make my future his special care if I  
would join his vessel. Being anxious to qualify in  
gunnery, and having passed for leading rate and  
fairly sure of advancement when the ship paid off,  
I very respectfully refused, pointing out that my  
ambition was to qualify for quarter-deck rank at  
the earliest possible moment the regulations per-  
mitted.

He went away, but returned twice on the following  
day, having in the meantime enlisted the assistance  
of the Second-Lieutenant, Duke Crofton. After  
persuasion it was at last agreed that my transfer

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should take place provided I could find another man of the temperance party to accompany me. Finally one of my close friends (who afterwards collaborated with me in all future life work until he passed away in 1916, being then a Lieutenant-Commander), Thomas Holman, volunteered, and we went to the *Dryad* together ; but we watched the *Spartan* leaving harbour with somewhat misty eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

### PLAIN SAILING

*'Whatever the emergency,  
Though "Bother it" I may  
Occasionally say,  
I never use a big, big "D".'*

GILBERT.

IN the *Dryad*, under the patronage of the Commander and the First-Lieutenant, Guy Mainwaring, equal success in temperance affairs followed, and within twelve months of our joining that craft, some 60 per cent of the crew were total abstainers.

In these two vessels there were two events which stand out sharply in my memory. In the *Spartan* there was at first much opposition to the constantly increasing number of men who stopped their grog ration. Whenever 'coaling ship' took place it was customary to 'splice the main brace' at the conclusion of the work. We temperance folk were then given a ration of tea and sugar in lieu, and on at least two occasions those opposed to us managed to put a purgative into the mess kettle in which the tea was brewed, much to our subsequent discomfort; but as 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church', such conduct only brought us fresh recruits.

The second event was in the *Dryad*. In this ship—as in all others at that time—there was the

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keenest competition in exercises aloft ; and the great event was sail and mast drill early on Monday mornings. Much of the success of these evolutions depended upon the leading hands of the cross-trees. In the *Dryad* this post was held as to the main by an excellent seaman (who, however, was always hopelessly ' half-seas over ' whenever he went on shore) named Ball.

One Sunday, he was on shore at Port Royal, Jamaica, where all the public-houses and also the passenger boats belonged to an ex-naval officer, R. Foote. Ball, having spent all his money and run up a bill in each of the ' pubs ', was keen to get off to his ship in the evening so as to be ready for drill at 4.30 a.m.

Foote, however, finding him so much in his debt, issued an order that no one was to take him on board, nor would he vary the order when Ball, at a late hour, went to expostulate with him.

Passing out of the grounds of Foote's house, Ball saw a donkey, the only beast of burden on the peninsula ; at once he determined to await his time when all was quiet and get off to the ship in his own way. Port Royal Harbour was then—as now—infested with sharks.

At 2 a.m. in the morning the quartermaster on watch in the *Dryad* heard the sound of oars and, as usual, hailed, ' Boat ahoy ! ' Back came the officer's

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proper answer, 'Aye, aye!' in a cultured voice. Later, as the quartermaster ran down the gangway with his lantern, came the remark, 'Never mind the light, Quartermaster. I'll make her fast at the boom': which ended the incident so far as that petty officer was concerned.

At 4.30 in the dim light the drill commenced, but as day broke there was first a titter and then a roar of laughter from all hands aloft, and when the First-Lieutenant roared out:

'Silence, what are you grinning at?' someone said:

'Look at the boom, sir.'

There, tied by its bridle to the lizard, was the head of a donkey!

The drill proceeded, and at its close investigation revealed that all the officers had returned by eleven o'clock. Then the men's liberty book was examined and showed that the only name not ticked as 'returned' was that of Ball.

Questioned by the First-Lieutenant as to when he came on board, he replied:

'Middle watch, sir.'

'What in?'

'A four-oared gig, sir.'

'Who steered and answered the hail?'

'I did, sir.'

'Where's the boat?'

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‘What the sharks have left is at the boom, sir. I *had* to come off to attend drill, and Mr. Foote tried to stop me, so I swam his donkey off!’

Result was general hilarity and Ball was forgiven.

The genial and hard-working First-Lieutenant, Guy Mainwaring—to whom I acted as coxswain for the whaler—but seldom left the ship for recreation. He did, however, go shooting in certain of the South American ports we visited, and on these occasions provided me with a gun to accompany him.

Once on shore he became the gayest and most care-free of men, and his behaviour to me was more that of an elder companion than that our relative service positions entailed, and we had really happy times. May I add that I carefully avoided the least sign of lack of due respect when again on board.

As the ship had, of course, no chaplain, the duty of reading prayers devolved upon the Commander. More than once at Sunday service his seamanlike qualities overcame his acting padreship, and he would interrupt himself in reading a prayer by some remark to the helmsman as ‘Mind your steering. Damme, mind your steering!’ and then proceed with the Church service as though nothing had happened.

It was very wonderful to note how, in both these ships, the men who had hitherto been in the habit



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE of spending their time on shore in the most degraded company, once they joined the Good Templar Lodge fell naturally into the methods of that organization. They learned recitations and songs, and with enthusiasm took part in its simple ceremonies. Coming thus into association with decent folk on shore (upon whom they had previously looked as far above them) many became attached to young women and made excellent marriages. I remember two who studied for and entered the ministry, one Anglican and the other the Presbyterian Church; also a sick-berth steward who, leaving the service after completion of ten years, entered the University at Montreal and graduated as a doctor, afterwards obtaining a good practice in Canada. There were many others who, in later years, have got into touch with me, simply to state how successful their subsequent lives have been.

One incident of the *Dryad's* commission was interesting: it was when the vessel was ordered to proceed at full speed to the assistance (and finally to salvage the stores and valuables on board) of the Royal Mail Steamer *Shannon*, which ship had taken the ground at Morant Cays, not far from Port Royal harbour.

On arrival we found this very fine vessel (on her first voyage after being lengthened and converted from paddle to screw propulsion) a total wreck, and

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it fell to our ship's company to save as much as possible of her cargo and stores. The first thing was to get up from below and transport to the *Dryad* some hundreds of small 'pigs' of lead, or so they appeared and all hands forward thought them to be, and there was some astonishment at troubling about such relatively worthless items of cargo when there was personal baggage and other articles which appeared of much greater value.

Consequently the stuff was handled with little care, and when we reached Port Royal harbour and were transshipping the salvage into a lighter to be dispatched to Kingston, the principal town, I was unfortunate enough to knock one 'pig' overboard. The First-Lieutenant said very little in censure, but he had the spot buoyed at once and sent a diver down to recover it, which was promptly done, when nothing further was said.

It was not until after the whole cargo had been safely landed at Kingston and sent to the Bank under an escort of the black soldiers of the West India Regiment that we learned that not lead but gold had been saved, each 'pig' of which was worth some £1,500, about a million in the aggregate.

In subsequent journeys we took out most of the useful fittings, and left the derelict to be destroyed by wind and sea.

It was in the *Dryad* I first saw Lord Fisher, then

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a Post-Captain. He had come out to Halifax from England to become Flag-Captain, and the *Dryad* (then under the command of Commander Richard King) had been sent up to meet him and bring the mails down to Bermuda.

The occasion was somewhat out of the common, as were the results as narrated below. The ship had for some months been employed on the hottest part of the West India Station, and was then detached to Bermuda for the crew to recuperate.

On arriving within signal distance she was directed by the Commander-in-Chief to proceed to Halifax to collect mails and passengers—that port being not infrequently frozen in at that time of the year.

Commander King was certainly not pleased at receipt of this order, probably in consideration of the health of the men. At any rate, with characteristic thoughtfulness and humour, the pipe was passed : ‘D’y’ear, there, the ship’s company? You may wear what you like, and the Captain prefers pretty colours.’

The men entered heartily into the joke, and christy minstrel and ‘dramatic party’ costumes were donned over the necessary warm clothing for the few days of the trip. On arrival at Halifax we found some inches of snow on the ground : when, having completed with coal, the whole ship’s company landed

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in the dockyard and, each watch taking a side, a vigorous snowball match took place, before either ship or crew had been cleaned of the adhering coal-dust.

Thereafter, as the English mail boat was not expected for some three days, leave for all hands was given (not in the usual watch and watch), and the ship was soon deserted.

The mail vessel, however, arrived on Sunday, one day before she was due, and I—who acted as post-man—was sent on board her alongside one of the town wharfs, to ascertain what passengers she had for us, and to give directions as to delivery of the mails for the Fleet.

Being told that Captain John Fisher, R.N., was there, I went down to the saloon and reported myself to him—whose reputation for rigid service routine was widespread. He heard what I had to say, and then, scrutinizing the blue fearnought suit I was wearing (which, although cut naval fashion, had a pair of huge pockets sewn on to the front of the jumper), he said, ‘What pirate ship do you belong to?’ I explained that as the ship had been sent straight from Central America the Captain had permitted the men to wear warm garments, which information was received with a grunt.

Astonished as he probably was at this incident, more unorthodox things followed, for after he had

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joined the ship at midday, and the mails had been delivered, it was found that at least a third of the ship's company was still ashore on leave. There-upon some three or four parties under petty officers were sent to comb out the men from their haunts on shore, and as there were not hands enough to drag ashore the heavy mooring chains (and the day being Sunday) the dockyard fire bell was rung and the civilian workmen came in and were put upon this work.

When we left, and passed down through the broken ice in the early evening, not more than ten hands were available for the watch on deck, and I took a double trick at the wheel for four hours, being relieved by an officer now and again to run round and promote circulation. Many of the men had returned the worse for drink, and over twenty were left behind and came down to Bermuda later at their own expense.

What Captain Fisher thought of it all I never heard, but it was clear that there was a certain hiatus between him and our own Captain. My own troubles were concerned in the number of men who had broken their pledge, and although practically all rejoined our Society, we always looked back upon this time as one of great difficulty.

There was no library supplied in the *Dryad*, but the First-Lieutenant readily gave me permission to

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have a bookshelf two feet in length fitted to the ship's side in my mess, and the small number of books it held were at the service of anyone who cared to use them. As a fact, I think that not one man of the whole ship's company but read the whole of my modest collection. At that time such a concession in a lower-deck mess was a great innovation.

The *Dryad* returned to Plymouth to pay off in December, 1877, and Commander King, who had relieved Commander Domvile, decided to allow the ship's company the old-fashioned privilege of having one day off duty with all their *friends* on board. Fortunately that custom has died out, for the result on the lower deck in the latter part of that day is indescribable ; half the women of the town were on board, and the decent wives of decent men were driven from the lower deck to remain with their husbands under the fo'c'sle to avoid witnessing the unbridled excesses which were in progress.

One other event is worth recording. One of the ship's company was a non-continuous ordinary seaman who was the despair of all in authority. He had been reported for offences against discipline by every officer and petty officer on board. At last the genial 'No. 1' (Lieutenant Guy Mainwaring) decided that short of mutiny or murder he would punish him no more till the ship reached England ; and for the last six months of the commission this

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man gradually dropped into the position of being quite a reasonable character.

But Nemesis was approaching. When the ship was brought alongside the jetty to be dismantled, he was placed in close arrest and kept in leg-irons between the two after guns, in full view during daylight of all who stood upon the jetty. He was not allowed to have his friends on board, nor when his relatives came were they allowed to speak to him. Thus he remained throughout the month the ship was dismantling, and then when the ship's company was paid off he received the wages due to him and his discharge from the service, marked 'Undesirable'.

During three of the five years spent on the North American and West Indies Station I had formed one of a committee, and had been successful in obtaining funds for the project of the then Chaplain at Bermuda (Rev. C. H. Harboard) to erect a Sailors' Home there, there being no facilities except public-houses for the men on leave from the fleet. That building was commenced before I left, and my connection with it in the sequel a later chapter will tell.

## CHAPTER V

### AT THE GANGWAY

*'One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamt though right was worsted  
Wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.'*

ROBERT BROWNING.

WE temperance folk found a warm welcome at the Sailors' Rest which had but just been opened in a disused grocer's shop at the end of Fore Street, on the site of which now stands the magnificent building which has grown under the loving care of the late Dame Agnes Weston into the finest and largest home for sailors in the world. I remained there three days after paying off and published a little booklet on my experiences, my first separate publication, *The Sailors' Rest, and How I Spent Three Days There*.

The work thus inaugurated has in my time done more to raise the character, customs, social and religious, of lower-deck men than all other influences combined. Miss Weston was so practical in all she attempted, and obviously so genuinely devoted to the uplift of the men, that from the first she secured their respect and affection.

Her plan was first to bring them into touch with



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the decent conveniences of life. Thus in place of the bare whitewashed walls of the conventional Sailors' Home, its rough deal tables and stools, and the service (loaned) table equipment of tin dishes and plates, the men's own jack knives being the only convenience except iron spoons, her restaurants from the very first were supplied with snow-white tablecloths, glass and china, with plated forks and spoons, decent cutlery, etc. Thus, although it was half a century ago, it, even in those days of 'frowsy eating houses', would bear comparison with the A.B.C. or Lyons establishments of to-day.

To men accustomed to eat from tables covered with tarpaulin cloths, their own knives, and never even a two-pronged fork in the mess, and only basins and plates when these were purchased by themselves, the change was startling indeed. Many of the waitresses were unpaid volunteer ladies, and the rule enforced was to avoid all familiarity, so that whereas in their own haunts they were called 'Jack', 'Tom', or 'Bill', here each customer was 'Mr. —', and 'Yes, sir', and 'No, sir', the method of reply. What wonder that a new atmosphere created new desires, and that in some measure what they had experienced on shore began to be the rule afloat.

Then free concerts and other meetings were held in the hall each night, and the men encouraged to

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lend a hand with the programme, no compulsion as to attendance, and a homely and considerate treatment to which hitherto they had been total strangers.

Later came greater developments: care for the wives and families, free tuition afforded for the studious and those preparing for examinations, banking and money-saving arrangements; and thus entering into all the needs of the men's lives with insight and true sympathy, Miss Agnes Weston was very rightly dubbed 'The Mother of the Navy'.

Here I made the acquaintance of the late Admiral Sir William King-Hall, who as Captain of the *Russell* in the 'fifties, as an example, offered to sign a pledge of abstinence if the men generally punished for intemperance would do likewise. This was the actual beginning of the powerful Naval Temperance Society. Two sons of this early reformer are now Admirals. Sir George F. King-Hall is president of the same society and one of the trustees of the Rest, while he is a Vice-President of the British Sailors' Society, with which I served in the last two years of the war. His younger brother, Sir Herbert G. King-Hall, was Gunnery Lieutenant in the *Canada*, in which I was Gunner, and there, in the absence of a schoolmaster, he held evening classes for such of the men as cared to be instructed. 'Worthy sons of a worthy sire', declared by Sir Vesey Strong,

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
when Lord Mayor, to be 'the finest officer he had ever met'.

The course for seaman-gunner in the *Excellent* at Portsmouth occupied some nine months. Meantime I passed successfully the seamanship examination for the rank of Gunner, R.N., and thereafter qualified in theoretical and practical gunnery for that rank, completing the double course in August, 1879.

Also during this period Miss Agnes Weston at last yielded to the many requests made to her to consider the establishment of a similar Rest at Portsmouth to that referred to at Devonport. So she paid a visit to the port 'to spy out the land'.

Miss Sarah Robinson had then a Soldiers' Home in High Street, Portsmouth, and here one evening Miss Weston met a number of officers and men, and a conference took place in regard to work in that port.

One point I had ventured to urge from time to time previously was to develop her *Monthly Letter* into a regular magazine, and she had already so far accepted the idea as to duplicate this little monthly messenger by a second one called *The Temperance Monthly Letter*.

At this conference my suggestion was considered and strongly backed by the majority present, and finally a committee of three was formed to consider

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and report upon the project. It consisted of Lieutenant and Commander <sup>1</sup> J. Y. F. Sullivan, Chief Petty Officer Thomas Pickles—an excellent fellow—and myself. With the characteristic thoroughness of the sailor, Lieutenant and Commander Sullivan suggested that at the close of the conference we three should adjourn to his vessel—then in dock at Point near by—and ‘flog the thing out’.

This we did, and in his tiny cabin we worked out the details, and by 3.30 a.m. our report was ready to hand to Miss Weston. From this grew the *Brigade News*, which, under the later name of *Ashore and Afloat*, has been a widely circulated medium of her splendid work from that time till to-day. It is circulated in every ship and barrack in the naval service, to many merchant craft and foreign navies, as well as being largely subscribed for on shore at home.

I took a hand also as representative of my ship in introducing some much-needed reforms at the Sailors' Home, Portsea, which, while it was under distinguished patronage, was nevertheless a badly managed and uncomfortable resort for decent men to attend ; it was ill-furnished and out-of-date, while the attendants acted as though they were ships' police afloat. As a result of what our committee of

<sup>1</sup> The title for Lieutenants commanding ships before Lieut.-Commander's rank was created.

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
delegates brought to the notice of the annual meeting, the then Superintendent was called upon to resign; since then there has been continuous improvement, until to-day it is run by the men themselves, not as a Home, but an up-to-date Club.

In September, 1879, I qualified for Gunner, and awaiting only the arrival of my name at the top of the roster for promotion, was drafted to the *Boadicea* flagship of Commodore Sir Frederick Richards, at the Cape of Good Hope, and sailed in the *Himalaya* troopship for that station.

The *Boadicea* was a most comfortable ship, and the officers were most friendly and genial. Among the Midshipmen—who all came under my hands for drill—was Harry Boldero, with whom I had much in common, and who also served as a Lieutenant later on the North American and West Indian station, when I was again associated with him.

After less than five months' service, and while the *Boadicea* was at Sierra Leone, the Commodore conferred a warrant upon me as acting Gunner of a small gunboat in a vacancy. As was customary in such circumstances at sea there was a whip round among the officers for uniform to fit me out; and the Commodore led off by presenting me with a frock-coat suit, cap, badge, and sword. As that gallant officer was over 6 feet in height and broad

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in proportion, and I stand 5 feet 4 inches, there was plenty of material from which my handy shipmates could manufacture a suit. The sword, however, it was impossible to reduce, and as it was nearly up to my shoulder when standing on its point, it will be readily understood that it got much in the way when, a couple of days after joining the gunboat, the Commodore came on board to inspect her.

Sir Frederick Richards was, however, a man who *did* things : witness his splendid service subsequently as First Sea Lord. He had noticed that the additional Boatswain of his flagship (Mr. H. Butters), an officer not less tall than himself, had a most diminutive sword, so he set negotiations going which resulted in an exchange ; notwithstanding the Boatswain had a sentimental affection for his, as it had been used in Sir Robert Calder's engagement by his grandfather, and by his father in the Crimean War. I have it yet, and hope it may be re-conditioned and passed on in time to one of my sons, now a budding naval officer.

The gunboat was a paddle vessel which had been built for—but never used by—Dr. Livingstone. Her principal characteristic was the variety and number of the insects she had on board. Two descriptions of cockroaches, large and small, as well as ants, infested her, and the cabin assigned to me, next the sponson, was always absolutely full of these,

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

so that sleeping or working in it, at store accounts, returns, etc., was an impossibility.

An amusing event occurred in connexion with these insects. One day I went as Officer of the Guard to a gunboat just arriving. The First-Lieutenant complained to me that life on board was rendered unendurable by great numbers of bugs with which his ship was infested. I remarked that I had heard that cockroaches always destroyed these unpleasant intruders. Said 'No. 1', 'Send me some as soon as you get back to your ship.' There was no trouble about providing a dozen females of each variety with their breeding pods full, and these were duly sent on board.

At Accra, some two months later, we again met this ship, and when I went on board the same officer assailed me with some choice epithets, declaring that although the cockroaches had multiplied and destroyed all the bugs, the remedy was worse than the disease, for the former now destroyed everything not secured in air-tight boxes.

The main part of our ship's company were Kroomen who were recruited at Sierra Leone, and who, on return to that port, would go on shore on leave, their places being taken by other men who came off in their uniform and bearing the same names as the men they replaced.

The Kroomen had mostly been educated in the

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missionary schools, and it was generally declared they had imbibed the vices of both races, while being outwardly pious.

One day, the head Krooman approached me as executive officer, and said the men wanted to give a sacred concert on Sunday evening. With the Captain's permission this was arranged for, and all the officers and the two white petty officers attended. The concert consisted of some capitally rendered items from Sankey's Hymn Book, plus a few negro ditties ; it lasted about an hour.

When it was over the Captain said he was going to change his clothes, and 'dipped' to his cabin. In a moment he returned, shouting, 'Someone has looted my cabin.' Then we found that all our cabins had been carefully gone through, and all the valuables, plain clothes, etc., had disappeared, while two Kroomen and the ship's dinghy were absent.

The latter we found tied up at a wharf, but the men and 'loot' were never recovered.

We went from port to port down the coast, and made the acquaintance of hosts of British factors and merchants, who were always delighted to render us any possible service.

It was a time when the natives were less sophisticated than they are to-day, and for an empty brandy bottle, an old coat, shirt, or pair of shoes, fowls,



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
vegetables and pineapples were procurable in liberal quantities.

When at Cape Coast Castle our only white able seaman died ; his death (from Coast fever) happened early in the day; and the Captain directed me to land and arrange for the funeral. As it happened, the only clergyman then at the place was the black Bishop, Dr. Crowther, and having fixed with him the time and place of burial, I returned to report. When the Captain learned that a black man was to officiate, he declared he would not permit it, and directed me to go ashore again and endeavour to get any white parson, independent of the denomination to which he belonged, to undertake the duty.

I learned that some few miles out there resided an ex-missionary who had engaged in trade, but who occasionally preached when required. Taking a petty officer with me, we tramped through the scrub in the heat of the day, and presently emerged some six or seven miles out in a clearing in which was a wooden shanty, on the *stoep* of which was a somnolent coloured woman.

We awakened her and inquired for the parson, and after a time she went away for 'de Baas'. In leisurely fashion this gentleman arrived, and I explained our dilemma. He said it was most inconvenient, but he would come if the usual fee was

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forthcoming, and being assured that that was all right, was turning away when I ventured to remind him we had been walking a long distance in the sun and should appreciate some refreshment.

'Oh, very well,' he said, 'sit down on the veranda,' which we did, and he then disappeared. Shortly afterwards the black woman came out with a tray holding bread and cheese and some coarse ginger-beer made by boiling ginger, and said, 'Baas say half a crown each.'

Surprising as such a demand was, I paid it, and after disposing of the not over-inviting meal, we departed.

On reporting on board and relating what had occurred, the Captain was very angry indeed, but did not cancel the arrangement.

The funeral took place in the proper naval manner at 6 p.m., and the Captain, after the ceremony, was very profuse in his thanks to the parson for taking so much trouble. He then, to my amazement, invited him on board to dinner. At the meal the whole of the officers were particularly pleasant to the guest; and when it was over and the coffee served, the Captain said:

'I understand you are entitled to a fee. What is it, please?'

'Two guineas,' said the parson.

'Just so,' replied the Captain, and (turning to

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
the navigator, who was also the accountant officer),  
'What is our charge for dinner?'

'Two guineas, sir,' replied that officer, unabashed ;  
and the skipper, urbane addressing the parson, said :

'Well, we're quits then, so good evening. Your  
boat is alongside.' And that grasping personage left  
the ship without a word.

The gunboat on arrival at Simon's Town was  
hailed up on the slip and her crew berthed in the  
dockyard while the ship was repaired and very  
thoroughly fumigated.

Unfortunately for me, however, as my name was  
not even then topping the roster for promotion, an  
officer was sent from England to relieve me, and I  
returned home in the *Humber* store-ship. We called  
at Ascension, and I was permitted to spend three  
days on shore with an old shipmate of the *Spartan*,  
sampling the standing menu of that arid isle, viz.  
turtle steaks and soup, and the eggs of the wide-  
awake, which creatures both frequent the lonely  
spot.

As I reported in the *Excellent* in officer's uniform,  
the Commander directed me to take fourteen days'  
leave and then to return in seamen's uniform as  
Gunner's Mate. However, before going on shore,  
the First Gunnery officer (the late Captain Tynte  
F. Hammill), who knew me, inquired about my  
affairs and with great good nature arranged for me

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to take charge of a draft of acting instructors to the *Brilliant* drill-ship of Royal Naval Reserve on the Caledonian Canal at Inverness: and also induced the officer commanding to permit me to wear Gunner's uniform pending my proper promotion by the Admiralty. This event took place in February, 1881, and thenceforward my place was on the quarter-deck. As I have explained, no effort had been missed to reach this goal, and I was looking forward to promotion to a commission as soon as opportunity offered.

The work in the *Brilliant* was instruction of the hardy Scots fishermen who belonged to the Royal Naval Reserve. They were an interesting and 'teachable' lot, though how scores of them who could not speak a word of English assimilated the gun drill and performed it admirably was a constant surprise. That the Government was wise in enlisting these men was splendidly proved by their wonderful achievements in the Great War.

I found them keen on duty and absolutely obedient to command. This was proved when once, with a foolhardiness only excusable by my youth, I marched 230 of them fully armed, and without breaking step, from side to side of the frozen Caledonian Canal, at least 250 feet across. That there was not a serious accident was due only to a merciful Providence.

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

Those were the days of the old Presbyterian cult, as I found on New Year's Day, 1881, when having brought the whole body into the Church at 10.30, the doors were closed and the service commenced. The clerk gave out two lines of a psalm, and then striking the note with a tuning-fork, the congregation sang them and paused for the next two lines, and so on through the whole psalm, there being no other music. The reading and hymns were equally lengthy, and when at length the preacher had reached 'sixthly' in his sermon, I was longing for release from a dismal service. We were not liberated, however, until just before two o'clock.

Returning to the *Excellent*, on the occasion of my first dinner in the warrant officers' mess, I was placed next the president of the mess, and immediately before grace was introduced as a new member. As the sixty-odd officers present applauded the announcement, it occurred to me that an acknowledgment was called for, so I rose and said how much I appreciated their welcome, 'but had done my best to reach this mess only as a half-way house to a commission'.

Thereupon there was a roar of laughter, and non-plussed by this, I turned to Mr. Cleverly, the kindly Chief Gunner in the chair, to learn from him the reason of the hilarity. Said he:

'My boy, don't you know that there is no further

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promotion open to you 'until in some thirty years' time you may get this stripe (the Chief Gunner's) for a few months before retirement. No naval warrant officer has had a commission these last seventy years: if you want one you must get the system altered first.'

Thus my vision of being some day on an equality with my cousins appeared to be unattainable, but though disheartened I was not dismayed, and decided to make the alteration of this system my life's work.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHINA SEAS

' *Such a neat little, sweet little craft,  
Such a bright little,  
Tight little,  
Slight little,  
Light little,  
Trim little, slim little craft.*

GILBERT.

IN March, 1881, an appointment reached me as Gunner of the *Esk*, 360 tons, armed with three 64-pdr. muzzle-loading guns, built with a practically flat bottom and fitted with turtle-back bulges fore and aft, to add buoyancy. The vessel was lying at Sheerness, together with a sister ship, the *Tweed*, and they were intended for service in China.

The *Esk* was under command of Lieutenant Lenox Napier, whom I had last seen as a watchkeeper in the *Inconstant*, and it was a great surprise to that gentleman to find a boy from his last seagoing ship appointed as his executive and gunnery officer. There was an Engineer officer of the old type who had not passed for promotion, a supernumerary Lieutenant to be dropped at Malta, and a Sub-Lieutenant to be discharged at Hong-Kong.

As the passage to the Far East was considered hazardous these two little craft were to sail in company with the *Daring* sloop; but as a matter of

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fact that vessel was shaken off as often as possible during the long voyage. This was protracted because the effective speed in smooth water was an average of five knots, while in rough seas this was much reduced. •

We called at Malta and were objects of interest to all naval men : the then Flag-Captain (afterwards Admiral Sir) George Tryon coming on board on several occasions to inspect her, and I heard him remark that ' only fatuous fools would have built such monstrosities for the Navy '. As I was to take command for harbour service on reaching Hong-Kong, and was, therefore, keen about the vessel, I remember being very indignant at these slighting remarks ; while as the *Esk* continued to do good service on the Yangtse-Kiang River until 1911, she certainly answered the purpose for which she was constructed.

Our mess was a pleasant one, and the Captain lived with us. Perhaps the only discomfort was the simple habits of our messmate, the Engineer. One incident will suffice to explain our trouble :

I am a non-smoker, whereas ' the Chief ' was an inveterate slave of the pipe. For some little time I used to detect the taste of tobacco when using my tooth-brush at night, so confided this to the Sub. That budding Nelson at once diagnosed the trouble, and suggested a remedy. ' The Chief ' often looked



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE  
in my cabin as he passed from the engine-room  
after the morning watch, when I was having a tub.

Said the Sub :

‘ When he drops in on you next time, let him  
see you scrub your toe-nails with your tooth-brush ;  
he won’t trouble you again.’

Sure enough this happened according to plan, and  
when ‘ the Chief ’ saw the operation, he remarked :

‘ Funny way to treat a tooth-brush, eh ? ’

‘ Why, don’t *you* use *yours* in the same way ? ’  
I innocently asked. There was no more tobacco  
flavour for me to complain of.

Our little squadron called at Point de Galle,  
Colombo, and Singapore, and safely arrived at Hong-  
Kong in June. After the ship had paid off and  
was reconstituted for harbour service, my crew con-  
sisted of the Engineer before mentioned, with two  
engine-room artificers, fourteen stokehold hands,  
and ten marines for deck duty ; these, with my ser-  
vant and myself, were twenty-nine all told. The  
two gunboats were moored off the Kowloon shore,  
at that time a desolate spot on the mainland, though  
it is now a dockyard and residential suburb of  
Victoria, Hong-Kong.

I served here for two years, and very happy ones  
they were. One of my relatives—a retired naval  
officer—was Marine Magistrate and King’s Harbour  
Master ; a cousin was married to the proprietor of

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one of the principal hotels ; while, as I had letters of introduction to some resident clergymen, social engagements were numerous. One of my friends was the late Rev. John Ost, who had married the niece of Bishop Burden, the diocesan of Victoria, and through that kindly man's friendship all doors in certain circles were open to me. The Governor for part of my stay was Sir J. Pope Hennessy, who had been one of Mr. Isaac Butt's Home Rulers in Parliament, and was said to have been sent to Hong-Kong to silence his eloquence. I found him an interesting acquaintance, and I owed much to his kindness.

In the circle which admitted me to its amenities and friendship there were several missionaries and other social workers connected with the Bishop, and among others associated with these were Major Cardew (afterwards Sir Edward, and Governor of Sierra Leone), Lieutenant G. L. King-Harman, Paymaster Sydney W. Wright, Rev. H. B. Harper, R.N., and many others.

My vessel was but infrequently used for firing practice, etc., and except for some four months' service as watchkeeper on loan to H.M.S. *Kestrel*, cruising as far north as Foochow, my times were exceedingly easy, and social and temperance work on shore filled all available intervals.

There were but two severe typhoons in the period

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

I spent at Hong-Kong, but both of these were devastating, the first one, in 1882, being the worst. At the height of the storm we counted over sixty Chinese junks on their beam ends or upside down, and the *Esk* was fortunately able to rescue all the crew and many passengers—over 100 in all—from one large passenger junk which dragged its anchors from quite a mile ahead down past us.

My marines, with the steadiness and coolness ever shown by that corps, worked the breeches-buoy which, when she had drifted abreast us, I was able to rig from her mast, after swimming down to her with a connecting line, and the junk capsized under me just as I had made myself fast to be pulled back to the *Esk*.

One day the Irish lad I had engaged in Sheerness as a servant came to me and said he had been offered a more lucrative job in the *Curacoa* corvette: would I let him go? I went over and saw the Commander of the *Victor Emmanuel* and got permission for his transfer, and also authority to enter a Chinese domestic in lieu. This man, Ah Sing, was a first-rate cook and a welcome change from his Irish predecessor; so, on next visiting my good friends the Ost's, I was enthusiastic in his praise. Said Mr. Ost:

‘What pay does this paragon get?’

I replied, ‘Oh, I suppose the same as the lad he

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replaces, that will be 1s. 3d. a day, and as he gets no food he will have his food allowance of 1s. in addition.'

'Good gracious me!' said Ost. 'You'll spoil the market. Why, we have five Chinese servants and the whole lot costs us less than 2s. 6d. a day. When you go on board tell him "he one pylong" (robber); say you want one man pull sampan, one man carpenter, and one man pull punkah, he'll produce them all for the same wage.'

Sure enough, I did as he suggested, and with that unfailing bland smile of his race, Ah Sing brought off a very slow, but very clever, joiner, who worked on board all the remainder of my time; a sampan with a widow woman to pull it, assisted by her small family—all of whom lived in the boat—the eldest boy being appointed punkah puller, boot cleaner, etc.

Although these occasionally received a *pourboire*, Ah Sing made himself responsible for their wages, which is an illustration of the cheapness of native living at that time in the colony: the dollar then standing at 3s. 8d.

During my second year in China the officer commanding the *Kestrel* sloop, Commander Lang, accepted a post as instructing Admiral in the Chinese fleet; the Commander-in-Chief thought it unnecessary to appoint an acting Commander

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pending the successor arriving from England, so the First-Lieutenant was left in command and I was lent as a watchkeeper until the complement was completed.

The day after I joined, the *Kestrel* left for a cruise to the Treaty Ports Swatow, Amoy, and Foochow, as previously mentioned. We arrived at Amoy at the moment a European woman, wife of a Chinese hotel-keeper to whom she had been married in California, was being executed with great barbarity. Her offence was not even a criminal one according to European usage ; but in China an unfaithful wife risks capital punishment.

This unfortunate woman had been forgiven by her husband more than once when guilty of amours with officers of merchant ships, but at last, falling into the hands of the Mandarin, was, in spite of the strenuous efforts of the various Consuls, convicted and suffered the extreme penalty. We were moored close to the prison and heard her shrieks under the knife, although unaware until later who the victim was.

We visited Foochow, and left the Pagoda Anchorage, going up the river to the native city. Here for a couple of days I was the guest of the veteran American missionary, Dr. Chalmers, who had been a quarter-century in the country. He showed me over the city, the sights of which were considered

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inappropriate for the lady missionaries to see, so these were living in the Missionary House outside the walls.

The streets were noisome and narrow, so strait, in fact, that when a funeral was in progress, or some Mandarin was being borne in his official chair, and a corner had to be negotiated, the centre post of the corner house had to be temporarily taken down to allow passage for the parties. Moreover, the streets were constantly being patrolled by men and women who bore on bamboo poles buckets of evil-smelling filth scooped out of the public cesspools which were situated at regular intervals throughout the town.

Nevertheless the picturesque crowd, and the sight of industrious workmen employed on the open ground-floors of the business quarter : fan-making, painting screens, cutting jade, bookbinding, wood-carving, or the more familiar employment of boot-mending and tailoring, all practically on the street, accompanied by the waving of bright-coloured signs, and here and there a temple with its praying-wheel and gaudy carved entrance, was intriguing indeed.

It was near here but a couple of years later that several young missionaries, whose acquaintance I made as they passed through Hong-Kong, were butchered by a Chinese mob : which is as excitable

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

and as irresponsible a body of human beings as it is possible to meet anywhere. Handled by a strong fearless man it can—mainly by fear—be rendered harmless, but with Oriental contempt for anything but force, is, if met by consideration and kindness, simply rendered murderous.

In Hong-Kong, which is, of course, British territory, while I was there an ordinance was enforced under which all Chinese, whether British subjects or not, were compelled to carry with them in the streets a certificate of registered personality, and at night in addition a lantern with the number of their certificate painted upon it. This was a provision to ensure that no bad characters from the adjacent mainland had landed, for it had at one time been a common practice for the pirates to enter the colony during the early hours of darkness, commit some crime and slip away to the mainland before the deed was known.

I asked several Chinese friends what they thought of this somewhat irksome regulation, and was in every case assured, 'It velly good, number one piecee pidgin. Pylong no come Hong-Kong.' It was the duty of my relative the Marine Magistrate to adjudicate in such cases as men or women found abroad without certificates ; and if these were proved to be aliens the sentence was foregone and exemplary. For a first offence twelve cuts with the cat : the

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marks of which were the registration in case the same offender was captured a second or later time.

Under the protection of this drastic rule the streets of the colony were rendered as safe as those of London, even though not more than four miles' distance by water from hordes of murderous pirates.

Yet in spite of these precautions and the patrolling of the town of a strong force of both European and Sikh police, there was a startling robbery from the strong-room of a bank, which at the time was surrounded by an armed guard of the bank's own employees. The perpetrators of this successful crime must have landed from the mainland nightly over a long period; removed all evidence of their activities and re-embarked before daylight. Burrowing at a grave, of which the flat stone was replaced by day, they ran a sap under part of the town, coming right into the basement of the selected bank.

Apparently they were ready for operations some time before the *coup* was made, but delayed until the night preceding the departure of the homeward mail, when it was customary for large consignments of specie to be embarked, and which would therefore then be in the strong-room. On this particular morning, guards having been on duty all night,



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when the officials opened the strong-room they found it void of every coin and article of value—except documents, which were discarded—and although the method by which entry had been effected was clear, and the baskets and draw-lines used by the thieves were left to tell their tale, not a man of the robber gang was ever captured.

Another clever victimization took place at the expense of the Paymaster of one of H.M. ships, which, putting into one of the Treaty Ports when *en route* to Hong-Kong, the Paymaster landed to cash a bill for dollars wherewith to pay the ship's company their monthly allowance. Promised by a benevolent Chinese banker a high rate of discount if he cashed the bill at his bank, the officer was persuaded and did so. Payment was made at sea, and as usual, as soon as the ship was moored at Hong-Kong, she was surrounded by bumboats.

When, however, the men tendered the money they had received in payment for purchases it was refused as bad. Promptly the Paymaster was appealed to and came personally to investigate: to him the principal bumboatman declared, 'Dollar no can do, he no number one, pylon pidgin.' Thereafter he went with the Paymaster to the ship's galley, and placing some of the coins in a frying-pan over the fire, very soon the centre of each coin melted, and the disk inside the outer ring floated

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off, showing that the silver inside had been scraped out and the empty shell refilled with a base metal.

As the loss fell upon the Paymaster, and a very large number of the manipulated coins had to be replaced, it must have been a severe shock, and it would require a number of successful deals in ' chop dollars ' and favourable exchanges to balance the deficit on this transaction.

Piracy is again rampant on the China coast, and it must be a lucrative business as not only large numbers of men are engaged in it, but also considerable capital as well, for the innocent-looking junks which were, and are, from time to time captured were invariably well found and equipped, and the fittings were of the best.

Some little distance from the moorings where the *Esk* and her three consorts were lying was a commercial dock belonging to a company the directors of which were nearly all European and the majority British. The Dockmaster was a master mariner with whom I made acquaintance, and on several occasions he had hinted to me that the particularly well-found vessels which docked for repair were in his opinion employed in other than purely trading business. Since then these gentry have acquired steam-propelled craft, and also are adept in the use of modern weapons such as automatic pistols

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and high explosives, so that the lot of the officers of coasting vessels is less tolerable than ever it was.

It was a not uncommon thing for one or more of the Chinese Custom<sup>s</sup> steamboats (under European officers) to bring up close to our moorings with a dozen or so of 'pylongs' (pirates) strung up by their queues to the awning ridge rope, their feet just touching the boot topping of the ship. Whenever these appeared, we knew that in a day or two after their appearance in the Mandarin's Yamen there would be executions at Kowloon within full view of the ship. The men were marched in single file to a certain spot, and made to kneel, their hands tied behind. The executioner, with a large sword, brought up the rear, and an assistant passed a cigarette from mouth to mouth of the victims. Then when ready the assistant steadied out their heads one by one by the queue, which by one stroke from the sword were severed from the trunks: a gruesome spectacle which, having once witnessed, I never saw one of my crew turn to look on a second time.

The land upon which these executions took place has now been ceded to Britain, and there are the villas of the wealthy residents of Hong-Kong, while there is a naval yard also.

Toward the end of my two years' tenure of this

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appointment, the Gunnér of the depot ship was invalidated, and I was sent to fill the post until his relief reached the colony. Now, the *Victor Emmanuel* had an armament of sixteen old 32-pdr. smooth-bore guns used for firing salutes. These were always kept loaded, and as the lower ends of the vents were honeycombed away by much blank firing my predecessor invariably poured loose powder into the vent of each gun before insertion of the friction tube, to ensure igniting the charge.

Of this I was unaware, and as the leading man (Chinaman) of the half-dozen men who fired salutes had incurred my displeasure on a certain occasion, a very trying time for me was the result.

The Viceroy Li Hung-Chang came down from Canton, and I was ordered to fire a 21-gun salute. The first 16, that is the whole armament, were fired with precision, but when the reloaded guns were to be fired the friction tubes only fizzed, and though we tried gun after gun it was only with a like result and we ceased fire at 16 guns. The salute was a dismal failure, and after a severe wiggling I was dispatched to apologize to the Viceroy and explain that 'the guns had gone wrong'.

Subsequently, after closely examining the guns, withdrawing the charges for inspection and so on, without discovering the cause, my faithful domestic Ah Sing gave me the clue, having heard some re-

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE marks of the Chinese leading man. That subtle native had got his own back by refraining from pouring some grains of loose powder down the vent, knowing that without this precaution there would be no explosion. When this little plot was explained to the Commodore he was so tickled as to let the joker off with a reprimand.

Our mess in this ship was, perhaps, the most up-to-date of any for our rank of officer then in the service, the custom of evening dinners and dressing for the same being introduced, which was an innovation much appreciated among warrant officers.

The staff of Chinese cooks and stewards was excellent, the only fault with these being on account of their lack of honesty. One day, as caterer, I went to the stewards' berth just before dinner was served and noticed the senior had his mouth full of something which was too hot to swallow, and which he was anxious I should not see. Somewhat wickedly, I fixed him with my eye while giving some directions, the unfortunate Wang wriggling in agony meanwhile. After a while I bade him empty his mouth, and then he discharged a hot baked potato, retaining which for the time must have resulted in ample punishment for the offence of stealing it.

At the end of two very pleasant years, in which

## CHINA SEAS

hosts of kind friends had done their best to make a happy time, I was relieved and joined the 'fighting trooper' H.M.S. *Thalia* for passage to England.

During this trip I acted as a watchkeeper, and shall never forget the pride felt when one day Captain Brackenbury ordered me to 'tack ship' with the watch. The *Thalia* was notoriously stiff in stays, but on this occasion she went round like a top, and as I gave the final order 'Coil down ropes' at the end of the evolution, I rose a couple of inches, for the Captain said, 'Well done, Gunner, the best "about ship" this commission.'

Captain Brackenbury was a musical enthusiast, and personally trained two companies of hand-bell ringers, one of officers, and another of ratings.

I fancy a wrong note hurt him like a blow, for on one occasion, while standing by the ship's harmonium (played by the naval Schoolmaster) and conducting church service on Sunday, the organist struck a discord, whereupon the irate Captain promptly boxed his ears. His general amiability, however, excused him from this and various other eccentricities.

On arrival in England I joined, as do all Gunners, the Gunnery Training School, then in H.M.S. *Excellent*, for disposal, and while waiting for an appointment came for the first time under the orders of Lieutenant John Jellicoe as his junior in

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a party rendering funeral honours to a deceased chief petty officer. As will be noted later, the occasions of my being in touch with the most distinguished of all modern naval officers have been fairly numerous in succeeding years.

## CHAPTER VII

### CRUISING

*'We ought not to treat living creatures like shoes or household belongings, which when worn with use we throw away.'*

PLUTARCH.

MY next post was as instructing officer in the Boys' Training Ship *Lion* at Devonport, a most interesting appointment where, although the hours were long, and the time spent on shore with one's family meagre, the supervision of the lads under one's own charge was absorbing: while it has been fascinating to watch the subsequent progress of many of these whose first service ideas were formed under one's own hands and inspiration.

For my own division of about 150 boys I instituted two term prizes, for that one who had made most progress, and for the best conducted and neatest in regard to uniform. The resulting competition was most encouraging, bringing out the best in the lads.

These prizes were uniform ditty boxes, and so could be used in any ship without transgressing the regulations. Upon being opened, however, they were found to be cleverly fitted up with drawers, arrangements inside the lid in front of a stationery compartment for a small mirror, with two glazed frames for carte-de-visite photographs, while there



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were other fitments and loose articles which made them very valuable to the winners; hence there was considerable emulation to possess one. As the owner's name was cut deeply on the lid this formed a further attraction. \*

Fourteen years later, when I was serving in Australia, a bearded petty officer brought me one of these boxes with great pride, quite well preserved, and its appearance indicating how much it was cherished, and described to me the circumstances under which he had won it.

Probably nothing could more clearly indicate the wide gulf which in these early years of my quarter-deck service divided the warrant from the commissioned officer than my experience on return from China, when I went in mufti into the (then) premier naval outfitters on 'The Hard' and was measured for some uniform.

The assistant on learning that 'the marks of distinction and buttons were those of a Gunner' at once fetched the Manager, who blandly informed me they did not make uniform for warrant officers, as such garments on their 'finished rack' would be seen by senior officers and would be very likely to cost them the loss of their customers.

He recommended me to go to Messrs. Larcom and Veysey in Queen Street, who were thoroughly good outfitters for engineers and warrant officers. I did

## CRUISING

go there and was well served, but have never forgotten the rebuff.

My next appointment was as Gunner of H.M.S. *Canada*, the ship in which the present King served as senior Midshipman. She was at Halifax, and I sailed from Liverpool in the Allan liner *Caspian*, joining the *Canada* early one Sunday morning before the luxurious breakfast in the liner.

It was a dismal come-down from the well-appointed saloon to the Gunner's cabin of the *Canada*, for there was then no warrant-officers' mess ; nor was there any cabin furniture other than a nest of drawers surmounted by a wooden frame on which one placed one's bed, a mahogany cupboard with a zinc-lined tray on top in which to put the wash-basin, with a lifting table over all. This completed the furniture, with the exception of a bookshelf and a rack for bottle and glass. Bath, lamp, curtains, chairs, carpet, mirror, and any other requirement or decoration—not forgetting the necessary bedding and washing utensils—each officer carried with him, if he wanted to have such things about him.

Into this wilderness I entered, and found the cupboard filled with pots, frying-pans, and some other cooking gear in a hopeless state of rust ; the custom being at that time, where no warrant officers' mess was provided, to give each officer a set of cooking and table gear of the coarsest description :

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three-pronged iron forks, black-handled knives, and  
similar atrocities.

The Boatswain, with great kindness, had caused the cook—there was a cook and a servant for the three W.O.'s—to prepare a large beefsteak with a couple of fried eggs thereon. These on a soiled cloth, and with table ware of a cracked and forbidding character, were so unpalatable a sight after eight days of luxury in the liner that they were sent away untouched.

In addition to the separate mess accounts kept by the Paymaster for each of the three warrant officers, the cook and steward formed one mess, taking their meals in the dark steerage outside our cabins on the chests of the petty officers with which it was lined. Nothing could more aptly illustrate the social ostracism or pariah-like situation of the warrant officers of that day than this detestable system of domestic isolation.

Happily, within a month of my joining the ship we found means to put an end to it. With the Captain's permission a panel was cut in the bulkhead between my cabin and that of the Boatswain, with a hanging table fitted on his side level with mine: thus contriving, when the panel was down, a table large enough for the three of us to take our meals in comfort, the Carpenter sitting on my side. A square space over a hatch which cut into the bulkhead on

## CRUISING

the opposite side of the steerage was fitted with another hanging table and a movable stool, and over these was placed a large cupboard to contain our mess ware, constituting a pantry: here the two domestics took their meals, and thus we formed a mess which added immensely to the comfort of all of us.

This method obtained until after the ship recommissioned, and then under the considerate rule of the new Captain a proper mess place was appropriated for us. Then the present King (an acting Sub-Lieutenant appointed home to pass his examinations) having left behind him a large amount of plated ware, table napery, etc., which Queen Alexandra (then Princess of Wales) had provided for him, some of these articles came our way, and we fitted and equipped a small but very comfortable mess berth, which relieved us from the unnecessary discomfort which had previously been our lot.

It may appropriately be remarked here that this class of officer has now little to complain of in the provision made for his comfort. All officers are given ample furniture for their messes and cabins, and what is better, this is always provided ahead when ships are commissioned. Lighting, heating and ventilating are now essentials seen to by authority and not left for individual officers to deal with themselves. At the time above referred to there

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE was no stove for heating 'even the gun-room, and the Captain alone had such an arrangement made for his comfort. What this meant on the Newfoundland Banks and in its fogs may be left to the imagination. To alleviate somewhat this piercing cold we used what were technically known as salamanders. These were round shot fitted with a long iron handle, with two chains to prevent swinging with the ship's motion. Heated in the stokehold, they were hooked under the table, and like Epps' cocoa they were 'grateful and comforting' after a watch in the damp chill atmosphere. Subsequent improvements regarding furnishing, heating, cooling and lighting cabins have been made, largely in consequence of the officers' own actions. (For further notes on the matter of accommodation, see Chapter VIII.)

I naturally looked forward to revisiting the various ports with which my previous service on the station had familiarized me, and to renewing old acquaintances. Right up and down the station, from Labrador to Central South America, there were friends to visit, and the privilege of this continued reunion was fully appreciated as a complete set-off for any discomforts on board.

Particularly I wanted to see how the project of a Sailors' Home for the Bermudas had matured, and as the fleet sailed thence from Halifax, the opportunity soon came.

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Arriving at those lovely islands, I took the first chance that offered and landed for the afternoon. At that time there were half a dozen stores and drink-shops on Ireland Island, just outside where the dock-yard gates then stood—the whole island has since been included in the yard. Passing these and over the bridge I made my way full of anticipation of seeing the completion of a scheme in which I had been so deeply interested as a principal.

When I reached the building, its exterior quite came up to my ideas, and then I stepped inside. I passed to the bar and, as the day was hot, called for a bottle of lemonade. The attendant eyed my suit of mufti and somewhat surlily asked who I was. Said I, ‘I am one of the original committee which raised the money to put this building up.’

‘Yes, but *what* are you?’ asked the man. When told that I was Gunner of the *Canada*, he pointed to a printed card which stated, ‘No Warrant Officers are to be served in this Home.’

Angry and abashed, I retraced my steps, and when crossing the bridge to Ireland Island again, noticed that the old Seamen’s Reading Room, which when I was last there stood opposite, had been replaced by a commodious officers’ club.

‘Well,’ I thought, ‘here at any rate is a place for refreshment’, so I entered, took a seat, and called for lemonade. The marine attendant at once sup-

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plied me, and handed me 'a chit to sign. Before I could drink my lemonade he had read the chit, and finding I was a warrant officer at once removed the glass, and very sternly, if respectfully, said, 'No warrant officers are served here, sir!'

Thus there appeared to be no place for one of my rank on this entirely Admiralty island, except the pubs before mentioned, where coloured labourers and the men of the ships congregated.

The situation made me exceedingly angry, and I determined to go back to my ship and lay the matter before the Captain. However, just outside the dock-yard gates I met the Captain of the yard (Captain J. F. Grant), and at once complained to him of the conditions under which I, and the remaining thirty odd officers of my rank who belonged to the fleet, were suffering.

He declared it was news to him, and invited me to accompany him to his house and talk the matter over, over the tea-cups. This we did, and as a result the next morning a senior Gunner of a ship in reserve and I waited on him at his office, when he handed us the key of the late Seamen's Reading Room, standing on a hill above the road, and suggested we should form a warrant officers' club in it.

So readily was this project taken up by our brother officers that five days later, by the work of our own

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hands, we had erected posts and chains enclosing the building in a half-acre of ground, set up the committee, furnished the room, and got out a syllabus of lectures. Among those who volunteered to deliver these were the *Canada's* First and Gunnery Lieutenant (now Admiral) F. S. Pelham, Lieutenant (T.) F. C. D. Sturdee (afterwards hero of the Falklands), Surgeon Porter (afterwards Sir James and Medical Director-General), and other distinguished officers.

The Club, which was soon after enlarged, has been in useful service until to-day, but the effect of this habitual exclusion of my brother officers much encouraged me in the determination to win 'a place above the salt' for ourselves and those who might come after us.

During the cruise of the fleet to southern waters, I renewed acquaintance with Mr. (then Lieutenant) Harry Boldero, who was serving as navigator of H.M.S. *Pylades*, and in association we took part in a long series of social and temperance meetings and entertainments for the men of the fleet. He was indeed a splendid character, and his good influence was far-reaching. Unfortunately, his health was indifferent, and he later succumbed to the malignant effects of the Newfoundland fogs, his ship being stationed in that part of the station for two periods.

An excellent review of his life was written by his



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mother and published under the title of *A Young Heart of Oak*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Canada* recommissioned at Bermuda in 1886, under that distinguished officer Captain (afterwards Admiral Sir) Lewis A. Beaumont, under whom I had served in the *Excellent*. The ship carried out the usual routine of that station, cruises in the Caribbean Sea, and after spending a short time at Bermuda then went up to northern waters.

Among the ports visited by the *Canada* where I was able to renew old acquaintances was Port Royal, Jamaica, which when we arrived was suffering from the very last of those terrible epidemics of yellow fever which are now happily a matter of the past, due to the careful research and study of the medical profession, who have now traced the germ to its source.

The Officer of the Guard who boarded us on arrival appeared very scared and apprehensive, giving us a doleful tale of daily deaths from the disease. It was not checked until the *Aboukir*, the hulk which then flew the broad pennant of the Commodore, had been towed away with the survivors *en route* for Bermuda to kill the disease by fresh sea air. The officer who had boarded us, however, fell a victim before the removal of the ship.

I well recalled my own earlier days at this spot,

<sup>1</sup> Hodder & Stoughton, 1891.

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when a similar, but milder, epidemic raged, and the dismal scenes in The Palisades Cemetery at the interment of those who succumbed. This is situated on the marshy ground of the peninsula between Port Royal and the mainland, and is below sea-level at high tide.

When a burial took place at, or about, high tide the grave would be flooded and some of the negro gravediggers had to stand upon the coffin while the soil was being thrown in. What with numerous land crabs, the food of which was not in doubt, and the dank vegetation right down to the water's edge, The Palisades is the most dismal and forbidding 'God's acre' it has ever been my lot to see, and it is well described by Captain Marryat in more than one of his sea novels.

I took the opportunity of going up the harbour to Kingston, the capital of the island, and revisiting the grave of Admiral Benbow in the parish church of St. Andrew. The doughty old Tarpaulin had been wounded in his long encounter with De Grasse, the French Admiral, when, because he was deserted by the major number of his captains, he was unable to complete what should have been an easy victory.

It will be remembered that condign punishment was meted out to the traitorous captains, those who

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE survived being executed as soon as they reached England, not being permitted to set foot on shore. Benbow suffered much, but possibly less than did Admiral Hosier, who was kept by the Government of the day cruising outside Cartagena with orders not to enter the harbour and attack the French, remaining thus two whole years, and his ship's companies meantime died from yellow fever like flies: each crew being twice replaced, yet when Vernon arrived there were insufficient alive to man all the guns in the ships, and two vessels were denuded to provide crews for the guns in the latter's triumphant victory, Hosier having himself fallen a victim to the same dread disease.

Leaving the church, I went for a stroll on the road toward Spanish Town, the ancient capital of Jamaica. Ascending a steep hill I noticed a little ahead of me an old coloured woman struggling up the road with a heavy bundle on her back, the cloth containing it being tied round her forehead, the usual method of carrying such burdens in the West Indian islands.

In the road still farther ahead was a strapping coloured boy astride a donkey, smoking one of the long rough cigars favoured by the negroes. The comparison of youth riding at ease and age toiling under a heavy burden struck me as requiring some

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adjustment, so I quickened my pace and suggested to the lad that he should dismount and put the old woman's bundle on the donkey.

Before he could answer the old lady broke in :

‘What for you boder me piccaninny, massa ? Him very good boy, leab him alone, sah.’ Meanwhile the hulking lad assented to the situation by a broad grin.

It was at Barbados, a little previous to these events, that I was persuaded to attend a ‘Dingy’ (dignity) Ball.

Those were the days when naval officers were compelled to wear starched shirts in uniform, which in that climate retained their stiffness less than an hour after being put on, when they assumed the character of damp blotting-paper. There probably would have been more lasting qualities had the starch used been of the quality employed at home, but the natives used a concoction made from yam roots, and of a very indifferent nature. It was therefore essential to have a very large number of shirts available, and upon entering harbour the first necessity was the washerwomen, and these came off in great numbers, competing against one another for our custom. One of the methods of ingratiating themselves with their customers was by giving invitations to the younger officers for a ‘Dingy

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE Ball', usually held the night next but one after arrival of the ship.

With other officers I went to one such. It was held in the upper part of a large house, and when we entered we found, in addition to large numbers of our 'dobeah' women very gaily dressed, a considerable sprinkling of coloured males all resplendent in white trousers and starched shirts, the former held in place by a narrow cummerbund.

We had not long been in the room before one of our sharp-eyed gun-room officers discovered that the shirt one of the coloured men was wearing was his property, the name being easily seen on the tab. Thereupon we all commenced to take notice and found that practically every one of the men was gyrating in the dance clad in the garments (both shirts and trousers) which but the day previous the officers of our ship had entrusted to the dobeah women to launder.

When we made a protest and asked for an explanation from the premier washerwoman, she was quite happy about it. 'Yes, sah, the gen'amen all wear de wash clo. We wash all 'gen, sah, when de ball all gon. All clean to-morrow noon, sah, yu see!'

I soon tired of the scene and went downstairs to depart; on the stairs I was met by a man I recognized as a boatman, who asked, 'What for go away, sah? Fun no begun yet.' I made as courteous a

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reply as I could, saying that I could not stand the heat. He said, 'Heat, sah! I know, not heat, sah, SMELL! When I dance I hot, when I hot I sweat, when I sweat I 'tink, an' when I 'tink—oh my!' His explanation entirely fitted the situation.

The *Canada* visited Quebec, and during our stay at that historic city we had the satisfaction of going over the locality where Captain James Cook, the circumnavigator—at that time only a supernumerary master in the flagship of Admiral Saunders—had, under the direction of that officer, surveyed the river and arranged for landing the troops under command of General James Wolfe. The important part the Navy took in storming the city, and particularly in scaling the almost perpendicular rocks on which the upper city stands, being quite overlooked by historians, I suppose, because of the overwhelming tragedy of the General's death. Yet it was Cook who discovered the zigzag path some distance beyond the fortress, and it was he who, having taken the sounding, piloted six of the ships with troops above this point so as to distract Bougainville; and then in the middle watch it was Cook who guided the boats laden with soldiers to the landing-place, whence led by some intrepid seamen with light lines in hand ready to haul up larger ropes and secure these as gantlines to help the soldiers up the steep ascent, so greatly contributing to the victory.

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It really was a most magnificent exploit, and one was proud to belong to the service which had shared in the glorious event consummated on the Plains of Abraham above the rocky cliff.

Our visit was marked by an invitation from a retired Army officer for three officers to visit him at his estate some thirty miles out, and I was one of the trio who accepted. We left at 8 a.m. in a buggy sent for us by our kind host, and as the journey was a long one we carried some refreshments : my contribution being some boiled eggs, as to which I had given our cook directions, as he was prone to serve our vegetables much under-done. We lunched *en route*, but upon attacking the eggs we found them the consistency of india-rubber, and those who consumed any of the indigestible viand had reason to remember the fact for many days. We learned upon our return on board that they had been stewed for three-quarters of an hour, ' to make certain they were hard-boiled, sir '.

The journey out was delightful, the scenery magnificent, and when we arrived our reception by the warm-hearted host and hostess most cordial. We stayed for four days, during which a regular round of pleasure was provided for us : shooting, fishing, and trips to visit beauty spots around. As much of this travelling was in small carts drawn by dogs (' huskies ') the novelty added a zest to the

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unaccustomed enjoyment, but we were assured that to enjoy thoroughly being drawn by dogs one must do so in winter in a sleigh or sledge on the ice, though even this is less exciting than sailing on the ice as practised at Quebec every winter, as the river is frozen over.

This most unexpected and pleasurable interruption to the daily round on board was not the only one I experienced on this station, for on another occasion an important official in the service of the Canadian Pacific Railway invited me and another shipmate for a trip up the line : supplying us with a saloon car provided with attendant and cook, and provisioned liberally for the trip, equipment for sleeping, and a roving commission, to be detached and run into a siding at any station we wished, and to be attached to and taken on by any passing train.

For three days we wallowed in this luxury of irresponsible travel, returning to duty on board much improved in temper by the exceptional nature of the change.

It was while cruising off the island of Antacosta in the Gulf of St. Lawrence that one night, when tacking and failing to enter the river at daylight, at 12.30 we got into collision with a vessel which, under sail, had similarly been tacking to and fro.

I was thrown out of my cot by the collision, having but just turned in after the first watch, and



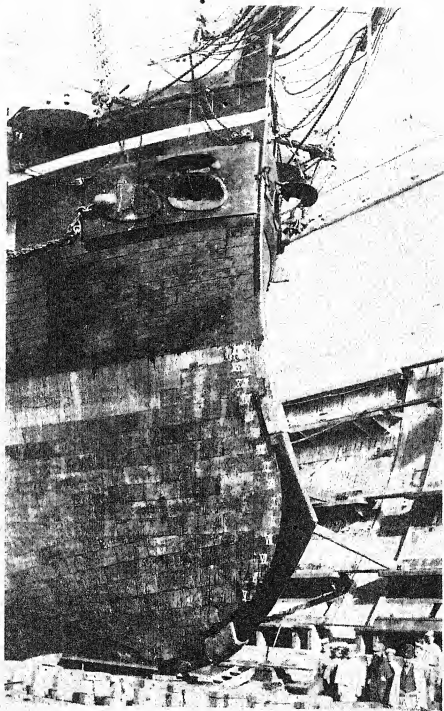
## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

at once heard the Captain hailing, 'Where is the Gunner? Send the Gunner to me.' Quickly putting a rainproof over my pyjamas I went up on the poop and was ordered to take command of the lifeboat and ascertain if there was any loss of life in the vessel we had rammed. So clad it was a very cold job. However, we pushed off, and after a heavy pull against the tide, which occupied well over an hour, we got alongside the ship *Peeress*, and found she was loaded with timber and, therefore, in no fear of sinking.

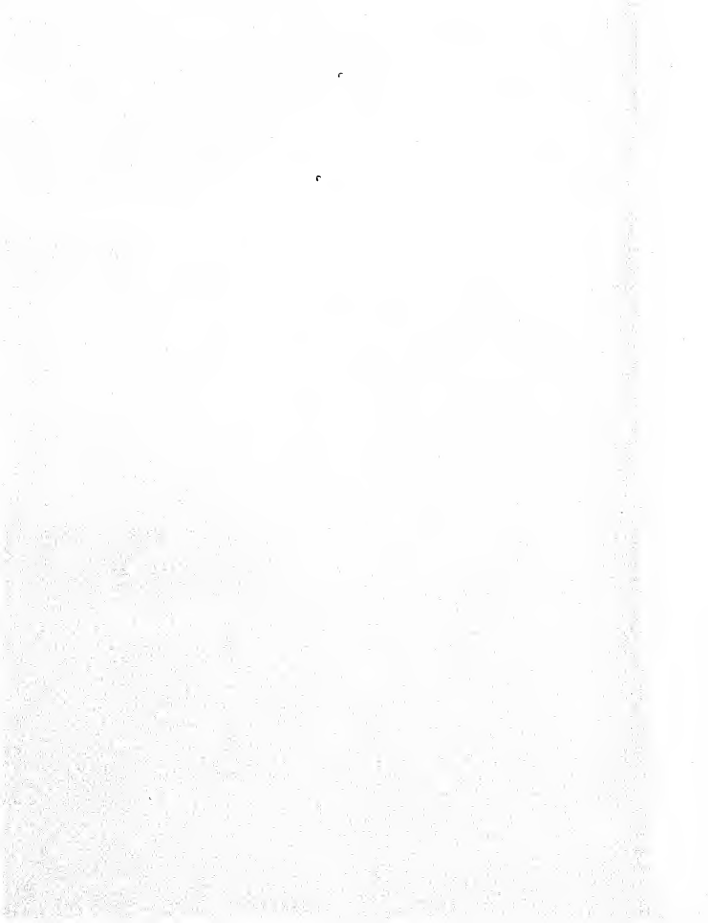
It was after 8 a.m. before we got back to our ship, and as seven of the *Peeress*' crew refused to remain by her we brought them on board.

We then found the ship in much disorder. Her solid bronze stem had been twisted to port and sheared top and bottom, the composite covering of wood and iron torn away from it for some 15 feet, and an aperture thus opened to the fore compartment. The jib-boom and flying jib-boom had been carried away, the foretop-mast, foretop-gallant-mast and all the top-hamper brought down in a tangle upon the deck.

Receiving my report, and aware that I had kept the first watch, the Captain very considerably sent me to my cabin, where, in spite of the riot on deck, I was soon between the blankets asleep. Not for long, however, for shortly afterwards an officer came



BOWS OF H.M.S. CANADA AFTER REPAIR, 1887



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below and rousing me up said that the diver, who was required to go over the bows to fill the aperture with oakum, hesitated to take the risk. Hence I had to turn out and superintend the duty: not too pleasant, at one moment immersed by the dip of the ship's bows and a couple of fathoms under water, and the next above the surface in the air; the result on the diver's suit alternately collapsing and inflating was indeed trying.

Inboard, the Carpenter was shoring up the fore bulkhead, while the Chief Engineer was filling the compartment with cement, which hardened as it was saturated and this supported the bows. So well did this act that the ship kept the sea for nearly three weeks after the accident. We first towed the *Peeress* to safe anchorage at Gaspé and, after some cruising, made for Halifax harbour. There, by the clever work of the Carpenter of Halifax yard, Mr. G. H. Bennett, R.N., the broken stem was removed and the hole planked over with a false bow, the work being accomplished in a coffer dam fitted around the bows. Eventually the ship went thus down to Bermuda, and in the large floating dock was completely repaired and her ram strapped on again.

Subsequently we visited British Guiana, off Georgetown, where, as all who visit that port will know, we were anchored some twelve miles from the shore. Always in a tideway and continually

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tugging at the anchor, it was a most unpleasant time for all who were compelled to remain on board, of which number I was one.

While thus moored one day, when the Captain, Second-Lieutenant, and myself were the only executive officers on board, a cutter lying astern on a long line, and with a boat-keeper in her, broke adrift. We payed out a 'grass line', which, however, was all out before the rapidly drifting boat could be reached; and in the end the second cutter was lowered and I went in charge, taking with us another small hawser in the hope of overtaking the derelict and having both boats pulled back by the ship's company; but when the hawser had been paid out to the limit we were still some distance from the first cutter and had to drop the hawser and pull for the drifting boat. Getting down to her was the work of but a few moments, to return against the swiftly running current was another matter, and indeed it was four hours later when the exhausted cutter's crew got hold of the guest warp of the *Canada*, having the lost cutter in tow.

Even then our difficulties were not over. To hoist the boat it was necessary to overhaul the tackles to the very end so that they would reach the boat when the ship was on the upward roll, and when hooked the slack had to be run up swiftly as the vessel rolled down toward the boat. I kept but

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four men in her, who found it very difficult to hook on the tackles, and when this was done the ship rolled down to us so swiftly that the men could not keep the boat clear of the steps of the cleat ladder, the inner gunwale got under these, the boat turned on her bilge, both gunwales flat against the ship's side, of course full of water. Twice this happened, the water clearing as the ship rolled away. We all held on, and after the second immersion she was run up clear and level with the hammock netting of the ship. There Captain Beaumont called a halt and ordered them to 'get the Gunner and his crew on board'. When we had been fished out, he said before all hands, 'Thank you, Mr. Capper, a very fine seaman-like piece of work,' an acknowledgment which I remember as among my most cherished recollections.<sup>1</sup>

On another occasion a very different pronouncement by the same officer gave me a less pleasant memory. At the late Queen Victoria's Jubilee in June, 1887, our ship was dispatched to various ports to celebrate this event. One port was Charlottetown, Prince Edward's Island, where I had, as a seaman, made many firm friends.

A programme of torpedo and gunnery evolutions was decided upon by day, with illumination of the

<sup>1</sup> Some time subsequently I learned that my Captain had recommended me for a commission as Lieutenant; though no warrant officer had been promoted thus for nearly seventy years.

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE ship by night, for the benefit of the inhabitants. On the part of the authorities on shore several social events were arranged. Among these was a garden party, dinner and ball for the Captain and officers. I went on shore the day before these events and renewed acquaintance with several old friends. All were delighted to see me, congratulated me upon my advancement in the service, and pressed me to be present at the three events to which all officers were invited. On the following day we found that no notification of the invitation had been sent to our mess, so I approached the First-Lieutenant and asked him about the matter.

That officer was not likely to favour the inclusion of myself or my messmates in such social functions ; however, as he had been officially questioned he laid the matter before the Captain. The latter at once called me into his cabin, and said, ' With regard to your request. You and your messmates are not included in the term "officers" in social matters ; I regard you, Mr. Capper, as one of my most responsible professional officers, but in social affairs you must *not* consider yourself an officer.'<sup>1</sup> I respectfully pointed out that the invitation came from my personal friends, who had fully intended to

<sup>1</sup> The ' Queen's Regulations ' specifically stated that ' the term officers includes commissioned, warrant and subordinate officers '.

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include me, and had also privately pressed me to be present. 'That will do, Mr. Capper, you have my decision.'

This undisguised social ostracism of myself and colleagues because we had risen from the hawsehole, while our service juniors, midshipmen and clerks, were included in the shore party, was a further incentive to working for the abolition of such unjust and unfair discrimination, and kept alive in us a determination to succeed in making it a thing of the past.

If this action of Captain Lewis Beaumont was disagreeable, his subsequent consideration for me in a time of trouble did much to atone.

In the latter part of 1887, the ship being with the fleet at Barbados, a cablegram reached me from a London physician stating that my wife was to undergo a major operation and my presence near her was required. As I was then within a month of having served three years on the station, which qualified for supersession, I took the cablegram to the Captain and stated the facts, suggesting I should write a letter asking to be allowed to return home. He was most sympathetic, and as an ex-private secretary to the First Lord knew all the ropes. He advised it would be better not to take this official action until he had seen the Admiral's Secretary and the Admiral and, as he put it, 'greased



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the wheels'. Meanwhile we sailed for Trinidad, and arriving there, I received a further cable from London hastening my return. The Admiral was agreeable to my being relieved and wired to the Admiralty to that effect, while I cabled to the hospital asking them to inform the Admiralty of the crisis. Later came an official cable: 'Mr. Capper may return at own expense.' Consequently I engaged a passage in the homeward-bound tramp steamer *Belair*, to which vessel my traps and self were conveyed the next morning in a gig manned by the officers (a signal mark of honour in the case of a warrant officer), and before leaving the Captain, in the presence of several officers, bade me farewell and said he was heartily sorry to lose my services.

To finish this story, which had a painful sequel. Upon arrival in England, I was appointed on the instructing staff of the *Excellent* Gunnery School ship, then commanded by Captain John (afterwards Admiral Lord) Fisher. He was relieved some months later by Captain Compton E. Domville, and while the latter was in command an Admiralty letter came down directing that Mr. Capper should refund to the Admiralty the cost of passage of his successor in the *Canada* as well as cost of cablegrams sent by the Admiral home and their lordships' replies, a total of £92. As my own expenses had totalled close upon £80, this was a crushing order,

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and, acting on the promise of Captain Domville when he requested me to join the *Dryad*—see *ante*, page 28—I waited on him and requested he would see the Admiralty officials and endeavour to get the order cancelled, particularly on the ground that, having served three years on the station, my relief had actually been selected before their lordships agreed to my return.

That officer refused to help me and said he ‘would not interfere with Admiralty decisions’: actually the decision of some civilian understrapper.

In this emergency (for my pay at that time was only £109 10s. p.a.) a young Lieutenant (since promoted Admiral and retired), who had learned officially of my trouble, came and offered a loan sufficient to pay off the debt, to be refunded at my own convenience and when it could be afforded. As a fact it was eight years later, and not until I was filling a more lucrative post in Australia, that this obligation was fully repaid.

It will be convenient here to introduce some remarks referring to the *Excellent*, for there are many service men of to-day who are quite unacquainted with the story of naval gunnery with which the history of this establishment is bound up.

Prior to 1833 each ship’s company in the British fleet—recruited as elsewhere explained—were trained to work the armament of their vessels by the Gunner

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE of their ship, and as there was no standardized system of drill, methods varied with ships and officers. In that year the Admiralty, acting on the suggestion of the late Commander (afterwards Admiral) Hastings, appointed that officer to commission the hulk *Excellent* as a school ship to train officers and men on a uniform system of naval gunnery. In addition to his First-Lieutenant he had a staff of Royal Marine Artillery officers, as the Gunners very shortsightedly stood aloof, considering that their ancient privileges were being invaded.

These warrant officers, who would have been the principal instructors, solidly fought shy of appointment to the school and thus lost for ever predominance in their craft. Certain young Lieutenants and Mates (then the cognomen of Sub-Lieutenants) were selected, and qualified for gunnery duties in the fleet. The instructors were selected from among non-commissioned officers of the Royal Artillery, their uniform—which the author well remembers as a boy—being a combination of those of the Navy and Army. Among the earliest of the Lieutenants trained were two, afterwards Admirals, Richard Moorman and Edward Field (the former for long ‘the father of the Navy’), and both of whom communicated some of the facts regarding the establishment of the first Naval Gunnery School to me at various times during my connexion with them.

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A corps of trained men, termed seamen gunners, was organized, who being under a term engagement were always available for manning ships commissioned, and many of these re-engaged period after period becoming in time the backbone of the lower deck. This went on, the numbers gradually increasing, particularly after the system of training boys was introduced, while the establishment so expanded that it became a separate command instead of a tender to the flag ship *Victory* and was among the most important posts open to Captains, R.N.

Eventually, instead of there being two classes of continuous-service seamen, viz. seamen gunners and general service men (the latter berthed, when not in commissioned ships, in the depot ship at each port), it was ordered that all seamen were to be trained in gunnery, being then eligible, after passing, to select the subject, i.e. gunnery or torpedo, in which they wished to specialize. Meantime the Gunnery School has always been the depot for Gunners waiting the appointment to ships.

I first joined the *Excellent* when it consisted of two wooden hulks, though shortly before some far-seeing officers had noted the suitability of a shoal of mud north of the dockyard, partly submerged at low tide, for development with the soil and refuse from the excavation of new docks, to use as a drill ground for the Gunnery School. This is named Whale Island.

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Thereupon, first without authority, and subsequently on Admiralty approval, certain timbers from ships broken up, and with planks and other material which willing fingers hypothecated, borrowed, or stole from the adjacent yard, a landing wharf and sheds for shelter were built on the high ground, which had first been drained roughly by bavin drains, or those made from rubble: this portion being levelled off and covered with shingle from the beach. Later on, bricks broken or whole were 'found' and the men built with considerable skill a five-roomed cottage, appropriately named 'the house that Jack built', and the Gunner who had superintended these operations was then appointed upon the staff and permitted to reside therein. He was given a permanent party of men to work on the island, and thereafter progress was continuous and much more rapid.

All parties for small arm, cutlass and musketry drills landed here each morning, conveying the necessary water and their meals, performing an hour's work on island development in draining, levelling, etc., before returning to the ship. Meantime a light railway was constructed from the dockyard extension, and the convicts employed on that work were continuously dumping soil and other material on to the original shoal, so that in process of time it was extended to some four times its

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original area above high-water mark. Each First-Lieutenant in turn thought it a point of duty to help on this work, until in the later 'eighties of the last century the Admiralty tackled the job through its Civil Engineer, developing the original whale-back of soft mud into one of the most charming marine parks and recreation grounds, with all the drill buildings, batteries, barracks and officers' quarters which now constitute the most complete Gunnery School in the world.

The establishment left the hulks and finally settled on this splendidly created domain in 1889, and it has been continuously improved by successive staff officers until to-day.

It was one of the duties of the first resident Gunner, Mr. Robert Mindry—who was a typical 'old salt'—to control the practice firing from some 32-pdr. smooth-bore guns, mounted on the west of the island and firing over the mud flats at targets set up at Porchester Creek, where a marking party was stationed in the test hulk *Nettle*. One day a large party of acting Sub-Lieutenants, who were always ready for mischief, arrived for firing practice with these guns. Mr. Mindry had them detailed in crews and then turned to see that the range was clear for firing. For this purpose he had a large service telescope set up on a tripod. He peered through it and saw, as he thought, the range fouled

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by a boat in front of the target, so he caused a signal to be made to the markers to have the range cleared. Glancing through his instrument again, the obstruction was still there. So that the young officers should not be kept standing at their guns, he ordered 'stand easy', and the young fellows, nothing loath, at once commenced to warm themselves by a vigorous game of leap-frog.

While this was in progress the staff Lieutenant, having noticed the absence of detonations from the battery, came down to find out the cause.

'Why is there no firing, Mr. Mindry?' he asked.

'Sorry, sir,' replied that veteran officer, 'but there is a cutter with tossed oars right in front of the target. I've signalled to the *Nettle* to clear range twice, but she has not moved yet.' The Lieutenant could see no cutter with the unaided eye, so moved to the telescope, hesitated a moment and then, putting his fingers into the shade over the large end, he pulled out a dead cockroach, which, inserted on its back with legs upward, had misled the range officer with imperfect sight. It took a very short time to locate the mischievous manipulator of the telescope, and the delinquent found his leave stopped for a week.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ADVOCACY

*' Choosing each stone, and poising every weight,  
Trying the measures of the breadth and height ;  
Here pulling down, and there erecting new,  
Founding a firm State by proportions true.'*

ANDREW MARVELL.

CERTAIN reforms in the affairs of warrant officers attached to H.M.S. *Excellent* were set on foot while I was serving on the staff. The establishment comprised the *Excellent* and *Calcutta*, both three-decked wooden hulks. In the last named only the Gunners lived, their mess being a large space enclosed from the main deck. Their sleeping accommodation was on the orlop deck, a dreary series of whitewashed cabins, void of all furniture except a fixed rack upon which each officer in turn who used the cabin spread his bedding, and a narrow shelf on which to place the single candle in a tin candlestick. The number of officers assigned to each cabin varied with the number of supernumeraries on board: the average number was five, and as they, with the staff officers, were divided into five divisions for night duty, as a rule only one officer for each cabin remained on board.

The contrast with the comfortable little cabins these officers were in the habit of using in sea-going ships was startling and depressing, while the for-



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bidding nature of the accommodation drove on shore to lodgings that large number who were either bachelors or whose families were not resident in the port, which was a financial handicap.

To correct this hardship a few of us combined to obtain authority for five staff officers to occupy one cabin : this conceded, we caused the immediate disappearance of the whitewash, the cabin was neatly painted white, the six-inch bull's-eye cut out to a small glazed port of 18 by 12 inches, a vertical rack built in one corner in which the five bedding bags were stowed one above the other, linoleum, rugs, curtains, washstand and equipage, chairs, table and pictures provided, with the usual knick-knacks from home to add comfort for the eye ; a colza reading-lamp, and a couple of judiciously placed mirrors to multiply the meagre light, and we were as well placed as the commissioned staff officers in the *Excellent*, and two of our five co-operators were saved the cost of lodgings on shore. The fashion immediately spread, and soon all sleeping accommodation was more or less of the same character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following description of the accommodation provided in the quarters for these officers in Portsmouth Naval Barracks indicates subsequent progress :

‘ Sleeping cabins and cubicles, with bath-rooms, showers, and lavatories on each landing, occupy the entire space on the first and second floors. All the cabins are fitted with a hot- and cold-water service, and the entire building is lighted by electricity and centrally heated.’—*Hampshire Telegraph*, January 21, 1927.

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Other innovations which are commonplaces to-day were the purchase of a billiard-table for the mess ; but this was not allowed on board until the permission of the Captain had, after some considerable delay and difficulty, been obtained. We also purchased a piano, thinking there was no need for authority for such an addition to a large mess of officers in an isolated position. We were, however, soon undeceived, for when Sir John Fisher's successor made his Sunday rounds and saw this item of equipment we were given twenty-four hours to dispose of ' an unheard of and totally unnecessary luxury in a mess of mere warrant officers '.

We also fought for, and after some considerable time won, permission to land for leave in the same way as did ward-room and gun-room officers, viz. in mufti ; but this concession was not made until the Commander-in-Chief had given a hint (after being privately approached) that he considered it wrong to discriminate between classes of officers.

All these things may to-day seem trifling, but it is upon these hardly-won changes in treatment of ' officers from the hawsehole ' that those now on the active list share unreservedly with commissioned and subordinate officers the usual amenities of life in the fleet.

Shortly after Captain John Fisher had left the *Excellent* and taken up the post of Director of

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Ordnance at Whitehall, he called for the services of three specially selected Gunners for service there in his department, to form the nucleus of a new and entirely 'Naval Ordnance Store Department', and I was one of the officers sent up.

(This happened just at the time that preliminary difficulties had been surmounted and I had started the publication of a monthly magazine for the warrant officers under the title of *Our Gazette*, which soon afterwards developed (upon being transferred to London) and became *The Naval Warrant Officers' Journal*, which is still the very useful organ of that class of officer, as mentioned more particularly in a later chapter.)

Captain Fisher, on assuming the office of Director of Naval Ordnance, took stock and discovered that the Naval Vote for this purpose was administered by a section of the Army Ordnance Corps : distribution of stores being through the depots of that organization. There was, however, much delay and difficulty : there were ships ready for commission rusting in the basins at the dockyard, delayed by waiting for their guns or their mountings ; and others, which, though equipped with these, were unprovided with appropriate ammunition. Also, in regard to supplies from some depots abroad, much dissatisfaction was expressed, as it was not uncommon to receive wrong ammunition on board.

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(The Flag Captain in Australia told me personally that when he was serving in the Mediterranean the Malta officials sent his ship a supply of 10-inch muzzle-loading shell for the 10-inch breech-loading guns of his armament.)

Such matters determined the resolute officer, who had become head of the Naval Ordnance Department, to create a purely naval corps to provide and supply munitions of war to the fleet. With the authority of the Board he set apart Commander Brown, of his department, assisted by the three specially selected Gunners, to commence to take over the duties then performed at head-quarters at Woolwich by some seventeen commissioned and warrant officers of the A.O.C.

His intention was to man the new department with wholly naval personnel. Certain Gunnery Lieutenants were put through the 'Firemaster's Course', and these were to be appointed Naval Ordnance officers, with Gunners as deputies; and the staffs at the supply depots were to be largely composed of naval pensioner ratings.

His plans, however, never matured as regards supply depots, though the head-quarters organization was brilliantly successful, and within two years the larger number of the Army head-quarter staff was relieved. The vested interests of these and certain civilians were, however, too strong for Sir

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John Fisher (as he then 'was), and in the end, instead of a Post-Captain at the head and naval officers composing the staff, an A.O.C. officer commanded, with a number of his colleagues and interested civilians as officials. In a word, the Navy was entirely jockeyed out of its job ; though it must be conceded the new department quickly remedied the procrastination and errors of the body it superseded.

My duties at Whitehall were mainly connected with this department, but in addition the congenial task of editing certain text-books such as *Notes on Naval Guns* (an epitome of numbers, weight, and capacity of packages carried in every ship, complement of all ordnance stores allowed, and stowage of the same, and similar details, making it a *vade mecum* for gunnery officers). Also *Instructions for Armourers* ; and as assistant to two commissioned officers who were compiling a revised Gunnery Manual. All this was new but most interesting work, and I have never before or since had such congenial duties to carry out.

An incident in this London experience was my undertaking the advocacy of the case of Mr. E. D. Young, R.N., a devoted adherent of Dr. Livingstone.

Mr. Young, when Gunner of the *Gorgon*, on the east coast of Africa, was asked by Dr. Livingstone to take command of his little steamer, the *Pioneer*,

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and with Admiralty authority he did so, and remained with the doctor in his wanderings around the lakes for some two years. Then the Government recalled Dr. Livingstone, and Mr. Young was specially appointed to H.M. Yacht *Victoria and Albert*, in recognition of these services.

Subsequently, Livingstone recommenced his African wanderings, and was lost for some time. To determine his whereabouts, and that he was living, the United Universities, together with the Royal Geographical Society, set up a special mission, and Mr. Young was given command. He had a boat built in section, and with this landed on the Shiré River, hired natives to carry his boat and stores, ascended the Cataracts, blazed his way through the forests, and so to Lake Nyassa. Here the boat was built and in it they traversed the lake, learned that the doctor was living and well, and returned with the good news safely to civilization.

As a reward for this work he was offered a post as District Officer of Coastguard with relative rank of Lieutenant, or, if he wished, promotion to that rank. He chose the former.

After Livingstone's death the same authorities decided to erect a permanent monument to his memory in the shape of a settlement on the salubrious banks of Lake Nyassa, and Young was again put in command. This time he had a steamboat

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built in section, and traversing the same route reached the lake by aid of hundreds of natives hired to carry his impedimenta. Then, his Engineer being invalided, the resourceful sailor himself put his boat and engines together and triumphantly conveyed his party to a spot where he established what is now the flourishing town of Blantyre, remaining only a few months to see all safely settled.

He returned to his post in the Coastguard (usually held by a Commander or a Lieutenant), and when the age for retirement arrived, twenty years later, was astonished to find he was pensioned as a simple Gunner, nor had the Admiralty any power to vary this most unfair compliance with regulations. We brought his case so successfully to the notice of the Treasury, the Admiralty, the Prime Minister, the Royal Geographical Society and the United Universities, that in the end he was granted honorary rank as Lieutenant, was awarded a special honorarium from the Treasury, another from the U.U. Mission, and was created Hon. Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Although the post of General Secretary for the Naval Warrant Officers was a voluntary and unpaid one (in fact, the personal expenses caused me to leave England in debt to the tune of over two years of salary), there were many compensations.

Among these were the numerous acquaintances

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made in spheres not usually touched by an officer of my position. To give the journal a London status an office was engaged in the building owned by *The Universe* R.C. newspaper at 310 Strand, just by St. Mary-le-Strand Church. It was the top room, one of four ; the other three were rented by two ladies, orphan daughters of an American general officer who had fallen in the Civil War. They brought with them from America one of the first typewriters imported to this country, and supported themselves by its use.

The first floor of the house was occupied by *The Detroit Free Press*, edited by Messrs. J. & R. Barr, and on the second floor was *The Idler*, the property of Mr. Jerome K. Jerome. To the ladies for type work came many of the writers for these two—and other—journals, and as I (a widower) lunched with the ladies, acquaintanceship followed with many of these, and a few such may be mentioned : Walter Besant (of Besant and Rice), Israel Zangwill, W. Laird-Clowes, Phil May—the artist—and Fred T. Jane, artist and writer. These by day. Five evenings each week were spent ‘lobbying’ in the House of Commons, and friendships there made included such legislators as Admiral R. Mayne, Admiral E. Field, T. G. (‘Tommy’) Bowles, Thomas Burt (father of the House), Joseph Arch, Charles Fenwick, H. O. Arnold-Forster (who afterwards, when



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Financial Secretary of the Admiralty and in collaboration with Lord Fisher, secured commissions for warrant officers), J. Havelock Wilson, and John Burns. It was necessary to have some suitable place in which to meet these and the hundred other M.P.'s who were helping us, so the then junior Member for Devonport, E. J. C. Morton, proposed me for membership in the National Liberal Club. Having no political views, this meant my resignation from the Junior Conservative Club in Albemarle Street, and this again widened one's friendship, which, in many cases, have been renewed in later years, and made the laborious and unthankful task quite worth while.

The typewriting machine which led to these friendships was not the only innovation in London at that period, for about the same time the linotype printing machine appeared. The firm which introduced it printed and published for me the first series of *Naval Warrant Officers' Annuals* (from the copyright a more recent *Manual* was produced). The work at that early stage was not very brilliantly carried out, and mine was, I think, the first bound book the firm produced. At any rate, I went elsewhere for the further issues of that series.

Just prior to relinquishing my post under the Director of Naval Ordnance, after serving seven years there, the editorship of the *Naval Warrant*

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*Officers' Journal* was taken over by another officer, the Head Schoolmaster of H.M.S. *Vernon*, but after a little time it passed into the hands of my brilliant friend, Mr. Thomas Holman (the same who had volunteered to accompany me to the *Dryad* from H.M.S. *Spartan*), and most successfully he handled the pen.

He took up my tradition of respectful and loyal, if quite plain, statements of our claims ; and in the eleven years he conducted the journal was the leader in winning many successes both for his class and for fleetmen generally.

Not the least of the good things to his credit is the suggestion to authority, and the launching of, Trafalgar Day Collection for naval orphans. He approached the (then) Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon, through his Secretary the late Paymaster-in-Chief, C. E. Gifford, and being given permission to proceed with the details of the work, went ahead with the scheme. This is now an annual event which, in addition to ship and fleet collections, is supplemented by the profits from certain social events, such as dances and whist drives, as well as by pageants at Portsmouth and Devonport, producing some thousands of pounds annually in support of naval orphanages.

Among the distinguished officers who served in the same department during my time at Whitehall

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were Lieutenants F. C. D. Sturdee and John R. Jellicoe, each destined to reach the highest rank, and be rewarded for great achievements in the war.

Lieutenant Jellicoe was some months junior to Lieutenant Sturdee, but was nevertheless fortunate in June, 1891, in being promoted to Commander. In conversation with Lieutenant Sturdee some few months later, I asked how it was he, too, had not been advanced : particularly as he had twice won the gold medal of the R.U.S. Institution a few years before.

He was very pessimistic, and said, ' You have handicaps you are endeavouring to overcome, but your class is not the only one which has prejudices to surmount. I'm not sure it will ever be possible for me to reach my ambition, which is a flag ; the chances appear very poor at present.' He wrote a letter to me after his much-deserved promotion to the highest service rank in 1917, which appears later in these pages.<sup>1</sup> It refers to this conversation and marks his views when, after a most brilliant and exceptional career, his dreams had become realities, and he Admiral of the Fleet and a Baronet.

I had known Lieutenant Sturdee when he was torpedo officer of the flagship in the West Indies ; and served under Commander Jellicoe in experimental work in the introduction of cordite for naval charges, as well as at the trials of the battleship

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* page 244.

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*Camperdown.* Now both of them were in the department in which I filled a humble post at Whitehall.

While serving under the Director of Naval Ordnance, the Rajah of Sarawak was sent to me one day, as I was responsible for the disposition of smooth-bore, rifled muzzle-loading (Armstrong) and muzzle-loading guns. H.H. wanted to secure enough Armstrong guns of small calibre to form a saluting battery ; now all these guns were obsolete or obsolescent (as a fact, however, the smooth-bore guns of 32-pdr. calibre were in use for firing practice for at least a quarter of a century longer).

The Rajah had learned that we had a number of the smaller guns he wished to purchase lying at Woolwich awaiting the process of breaking-up, and naturally wished to get them at breaking-up prices ; for this he had obtained authority. I pointed out that the guns without mountings, ' side arms ' and equipment were not much use to him, so it was decided that I should ask permission to transfer the required number with fittings to him at the agreed price. That permission was given, and the descendant of the celebrated naval Captain who first assumed the post of ruler of that State got guns, mountings, and all spare parts and tools, brass powder-cases filled with appropriate charges, and other necessary impedimenta, at a peppercorn rate from a generous Admiralty.

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He was much more fortunate than was the Corporation of Aberdeen in 1908, who, acting on my suggestion, applied to the Admiralty for a few 32-pdr. guns from a disused battery on the beach there, ordered to be returned to Woolwich for breaking-up. They were told they might retain these as souvenirs upon payment of £200 per gun and wooden carriage. Naturally there was no sale.

The last holder of the post of Director of Naval Ordnance under whom I served was also a notable officer, Captain Kane, who had commanded the *Calliope*, and brought her safely through the tremendous hurricane at Apia, Samoa, when all the other war vessels present were wrecked.

I ought not to close these references to service at Whitehall and omit a notable event which occurred while there. One day the messenger announced there was a gentleman inquiring for me, and upon his being shown into the room he informed me his name was Alfred Harmsworth, and that he was the editor of a weekly journal named *Answers*. He further said he had seen some copies of the *Royal Naval Warrant Officer's Journal*, which he understood I was conducting; that he liked my style of writing, and would be glad to have me as a regular contributor to his paper in regard to naval customs and methods, excluding altogether any reference to questions of naval policy.

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As I had been meeting the school bills of my children by aid of my pen in this particular way, it did not take long to make up my mind and promptly come to terms with the future Lord Northcliffe. I found him exceptionally liberal, and served him for some time to our mutual satisfaction.

On several occasions I joined his round-table conferences which were held in his Fleet Street office on the model of the famous 'round table' of *Punch*, the office of which was exactly opposite.

After this long period at the Admiralty, during which, with the cordial co-operation of my wife, a varied and strenuous service for the benefit of fleet-men and the officers who are promoted from the lower deck had been continuously carried out, largely improving their opportunities and position, I was appointed as Ordnance Store officer at Sydney, New South Wales.

Why my appointment at Whitehall was thus terminated when it had originally been intended to endure until the date of my retirement for age deserves a chapter to itself.

## CHAPTER IX

### READING THE LOG

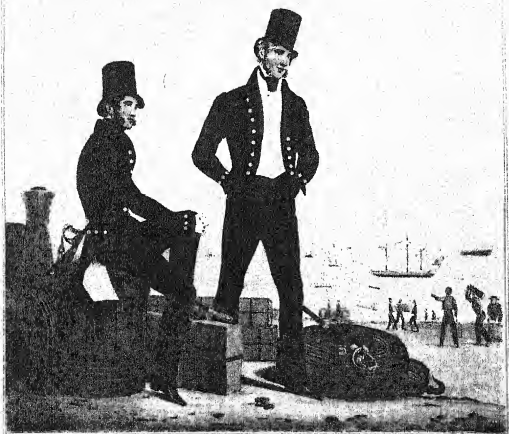
*' Ah, who can tell how hard it is to climb  
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar ? '*

JAMES BEATTIE.

THE warrant rank in the Royal Navy is the most ancient of all, being that given to the ship's officers when soldiers were embarked for fighting and sailors did only seamen's duty. In process of time the executive rank became permanent, being evolved from Army officers appointed to command ships or fleets, or from courtiers similarly sent afloat. Till the end of the eighteenth century none but executive officers held the King's Commission, but from 1802 downward one by one the various classes of warrant officers were advanced to commissions, leaving, in 1881, when I reached warrant rank, only Gunners, Boatswains and Carpenters as warrant officers.

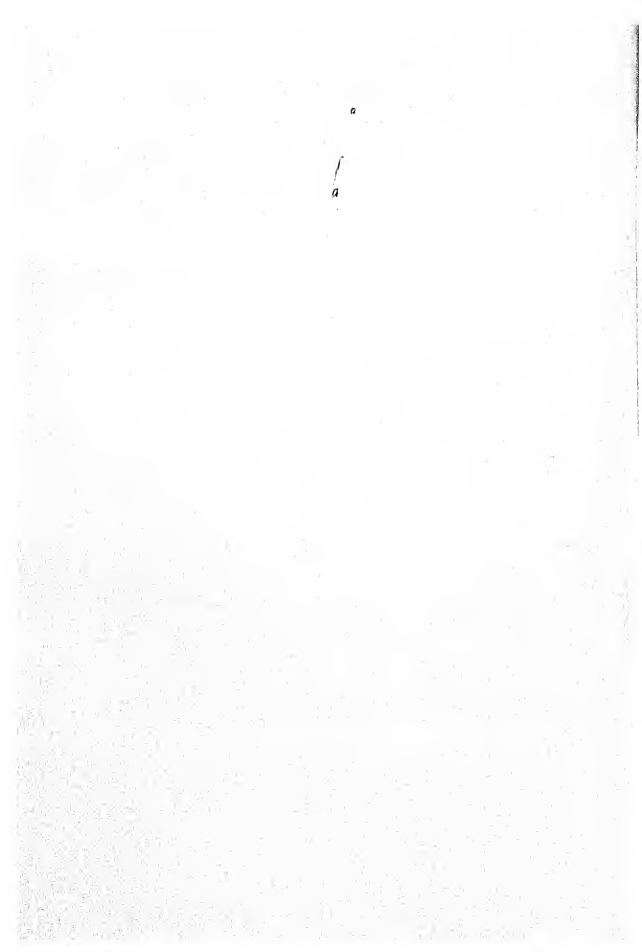
These, according to the ' Queen's Regulations ', were included in the officers corps and then held relative status with, but before, Second-Lieutenants of the military service.

In the same year as my promotion the War Office introduced Army warrant officers, not, however, as officers, but as superior non-commissioned officers. Thus, in the Navy, the term is ' officers and men ',



FULL DRESS OF GUNNERS, R.N., 1822





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and in the Army it is 'officers, warrant officers and men', a difference which is greater in fact than in title.

The naval warrant officers have a Death Benefit Association, which has had continuous existence since 1792. When it was established there was but one class of commissioned officer, the executive; all others were by warrant. This society, in addition to its Death Benefit work, also concerned itself in the advancement of its members professionally, and with such success did it function that one by one, commencing with Masters, and lastly the Engineers (who had originally entered as civilians and then obtained warrants), all the quarter-deck warrant officers had moved up to ward-room rank except Gunners, Boatswains, and Carpenters.

The old custom of advancing men to commissions either through the Gunner, Boatswain or Midshipman grade, or that of Master's Mate, had ceased in 1818, the last promoted being a young A.B. who eventually reached the rank of Admiral (Sir John Kingcome). From the time that system (which was called the 'Tarpaulins') was abrogated the warrant officers had been pressing for its resumption, but with no effect. In 1852, largely because of this society's representation, a Committee of Flag Officers was appointed to report on methods

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of promotion and manning the Navy, and in 1858  
a Royal Commission sat for the same purpose and  
also took evidence.

The latter reported, and in consequence a clause  
was inserted in the Regulations authorizing promo-  
tion of warrant officers to Lieutenant for deeds of  
gallantry and daring. Also a quasi-commissioned  
rank of Chief Gunner, Boatswain and Carpenter was  
established for a small percentage of seniors of these  
three classes, but to remain in their own messes :  
these were promoted as from June, 1865. No  
promotions for gallantry, however, occurred for  
thirty years, although numerous recommendations  
were made.<sup>1</sup>

On the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in  
1887, however, two officers, selected from fourteen  
recommended, had been promoted Lieutenants ; for  
the remainder the old soul-deadening career of some  
thirty years in one rank still obtained.

Let me describe the status, position, and duties  
of the warrant officers at the time of which I write.  
In cruisers and smaller vessels they added to their  
proper functions the duty of taking their turn with  
the Lieutenants and Sub-Lieutenants in watch-  
keeping at sea ; and whereas at that time the regular  
watchkeeper kept his watch and had but few

<sup>1</sup> It was of the above facts I was unaware when introduced  
to the *Excellent's* warrant officers' mess. *Vide* page 54.

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other duties (the divisional system was not then invented), the warrant officer detailed for additional watchkeeping had by day his proper job as Gunner or Boatswain to carry out. So much for his professional work, in which his status in most ships at sea was among the most experienced and reliable of the officers.

In all other matters care was taken to emphasize their inferiority. In a small ship the one warrant officer lived in a cabin placed forward on the men's mess deck, generally some 7 feet by 6 feet in size, the floor space 7 feet by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet : this was dormitory, dining-room, bathroom, and office combined. In many ships he was entirely isolated from the remainder of the officers, not even being included in the common smoking circle on the upper deck ; and his position made it imperative he should not associate familiarly with the senior petty officers who lived outside his cabin door.

Never included in social events to which all other officers were invited, he was a man apart from them, while the respect he earned from his subordinates depended upon his respect for his own position. (I personally served in a cruiser for three years with two entirely distinct sets of officers, all of whom I am certain greatly respected me, yet throughout all that long period I was never once invited even to take a cup of afternoon tea in the ward-room, though

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for nearly two years I shared the watchkeeping duties with the lieutenants.

A rating, the lowest in status and the worst paid, was set apart as 'warrant officer's servant', who in the case of two or less warrant officers in a ship was also the cook. It was impossible to obtain a competent cook for that wage, so the result was generally disastrous to the officers' digestion. Thus, with mentally frayed temper from the ostracism from which he suffered (if the least bit sensitive) added to a recurring physical nausea from a succession of ill-cooked meals, it was wonderful that in the majority of cases their loyalty and sense of duty rose superior to the disabilities to which these officers were subject.

To accentuate the evils of this caste system, there were at this time nearly eighty who were specially appointed to ships 'in lieu of a Lieutenant' purely for watchkeeping duties. Yet even though their Captains considered them the most reliable for this responsible work, for them, no matter how able, there was no possible advancement to higher rank until about twelve months before they were retired under the age clause, and then not a proper commission.

Several young warrant officers, the major number of whom were sons or brothers of commissioned naval officers, had come to the conclusion that the

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time had arrived when this autocratic system which exacted full performance of duty as officers from our class, while keeping them 'below the salt', should cease. Hitherto the society had pushed its claims by the medium of a paid advocate, a retired commissioned officer, and in fear of the Regulations, which forbade 'combination' or writing to the Press on service matters, had left all its propaganda to this individual. Having for years, under a pseudonym, been in the habit of writing for magazines, etc., on non-service subjects, and exasperated by the lack of progress achieved by this advocate, I determined, in 1888, on striking out a new line and pushing the claims of the class myself, both in the Press and also by the publication of a monthly periodical, even though ruin should follow my trial by court-martial; and this last, being then a widower, I did not greatly dread.

Thus in August, 1888, *The Naval Warrant Officers' Journal* was established at my expense, I being both editor and manager. For the first year it was given away free to every warrant officers' mess in the service at home and abroad, and copies were also dispatched to the Lords of the Admiralty, and each flag officer in commission. The little journal has been regularly published ever since with varying merit as its editor changes, but always with the interest of the class it represents as its *metier*.

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What it accomplished was remarkable, and one builded better than one knew. The officers who composed the class had from long years of ill success become pessimistic as to any possibility of improving their lot, and had split up into sectional societies for (ostensibly) self-improvement.

Within a year of the first publication of the journal, a new spirit had become evident, the sectional societies dissolved, the ancient one found its membership rapidly increasing, and, in addition, many who had scornfully held aloof from all associations began to see that 'unity is strength', and inspired by the new atmosphere of hope, threw in their lot with the eager reformers, so that the great majority of the class were members.

The monthly meetings of the society were crowded, particularly with younger men, and as the teaching of the new organ was 'Educate and Advance', various methods were adopted by the ambitious and studious to improve themselves, so that when success came there would be a *quid pro quo* for any advance in rank conceded.

Moreover, the journal preached that whatever the standard set for advancement to commissions, these officers were prepared to submit to it ; and definitely it was stated ' that without service tuition or expense to the State they were prepared to put forward candidates to be examined in the same subjects as

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were set for gun-room officers passing for Lieutenant after years of instruction'.

In spite of this, when success first came in 1903, some fifteen years later, only seniors were advanced, and this without examination, and it was not until 1921 that these statements were put to the test and several officers between the ages of 35 and 42 brilliantly succeeded in proving their absolute accuracy. The system is now in restricted use and some few officers are advanced thus by examination. In the meantime, in 1913, under Mr. Winston Churchill, an avenue for promotion to commissions opened for young warrant and petty officers, through the rank of Mate, and on to Commander: that being the real limit of advancement on account of the higher age of these officers when they reach the promotion zone as compared with their brother officers ex Dartmouth and Special Entry direct to the quarter-deck.

But to return to 1888. After joining the Admiralty, my two colleagues and I employed our spare time in interviewing editors of London papers, Peers, Members of Parliament, and other prominent men, pointing out that though in the Army (and in the Royal Marines under the Admiralty) commissions were conferred on men from the ranks, yet in the Navy, where the men promoted to warrants were daily doing the same duties as Lieutenants, only the



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two commissions previously referred to had been granted since 1818—a period of seventy years.

When this propaganda had cleared the way, the society issued *An Earnest Appeal for Promotion from the Ranks R.N.*, and copies were sent to each Peer of Parliament, M.P., editors of all dailies, Admirals commanding, Captains of ships, and to each warrant officer.

The day following its publication, all but one London daily newspaper supported the claim in a leader, *The Times* being specially friendly, and on the publication of *Punch* a long poem and cartoon gave further impetus to the exposure of what one writer called 'a glaring scandal'.

Followed much newspaper correspondence from Admirals and others, in which my colleagues and I joined, and as we knew we had the support of some of the most distinguished officers, among whom was Sir John Fisher, it looked very like early success. From the first, we asked only for promotion for selected officers who could pass the same tests as did the Lieutenants, and as some eighty of our class were at the time appointed to ships to perform Lieutenants' duties, we had a strong argument.

Our case was presented in Parliament by the late Commander G. E. Price, M.P. for Devonport, with a number of supporters. Lord George Hamilton, the First Lord, temporized, and in the end the

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motion was withdrawn, while another member—the late Admiral Mayne, M.P. for Pembroke—undertook to act on behalf of the Admiralty to see if the appeal was really supported by the majority of the warrant officers. Subsequently a plebiscite was taken, and 98 per cent. declared their affirmative views.

Thereafter a Committee on Manning the Navy was set up, under the presidency of Admiral Sir Anthony Hiley Hoskins (a late First Sea Lord), the secretaries being Captain Tynte Hammill, and Fleet-Paymaster C. E. Gifford. With this Committee I was in association until, in 1895, they had decided upon their Report ; and then, having one day been seen by the Director of Naval Ordnance (Admiral Domvile) in conference with Mr. John Burns and the then junior member for Devonport, Mr. E. J. C. Morton, in the inner lobby of the House of Commons, he sent for me the following morning and said he objected to political wirepullers in his department, and would send me to sea.

I communicated this to Captain Hammill, who smiled, and eventually I was told to select a post outside Whitehall, and chose that of officer in charge of Ordnance Stores, Sydney, with the proviso that the officer then there should complete his time—over twelve months—before being relieved by me. That arrangement was carried out, and it was not until I had been in Sydney some months that the reforms

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE which had been decided upon by the Committee became operative. Briefly, these raised the pay of 60 per cent. of the class; gave three times the number of commissions as 'Chiefs' and cost the Government £40,000 the first year. *But no commissions to Lieutenant's rank were granted.*

The great achievement, however, was that we benefited a vast proportion of the lower-deck personnel as we dropped our original claim for commissions for a small number of warrant officers, substituting therefor a scheme which was embodied in *A Tree of Promotion* (see opposite page), which provided for every class of man on the lower deck—seamen, stoker, artisan, mechanic, writer and steward—an avenue for advancement to warrant and to commission<sup>1</sup>; and this has since been made operative by the Admiralty to the last comma.

Instead, therefore, of benefiting (say) ten individuals yearly, there are now some 3,000 ex-lower-deck men holding commissions from Commander to Lieutenant,<sup>2</sup> either active or retired, and at least 1,000 officers of various classes which, until our scheme was presented, could reach no officer's rank at all.

What kept the quarter-deck secure from the

<sup>1</sup> This great increase made it impossible to provide cabins for all these officers.

<sup>2</sup> And one Captain (now retired) promoted under the Gallantry Clause.



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advance of men from the lower deck was the system by which alone—except for the few King's Cadets from the Mercantile training ships *Worcester* and *Conway*—entry was confined to candidates nominated by the Admiralty Board, or by a limited number of senior naval officers. Thus, executive officers belonged to a section only of the community, and what was termed 'naval families' were created, who for generations provided officers for the fleet. This, while it was an excellent system for maintaining the highest naval traditions, had also the defect which monopolistic patronage always produces, and was in some quarters so mistaken as to lead to the fixed idea that the Navy was the close preserve of these naval families and not the property of the Sovereign and the nation.

This stupid and extreme view was bluntly put to me by a lady who had shown great kindness to me : she was the mother of a Sub-Lieutenant with whom I had served, and discussing the matter she summed up in these terse and uncompromising words :

' I have the greatest sympathy with you personally in your desire to rise, but you have chosen the wrong service. The Navy belongs to us, and if you were to win the commissions you ask for it would be at the expense of our sons and nephews whose birth-right it is.'

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I took a written note, of her point of view and have since shown it to important persons to illustrate 'how hard the steep we had to climb'. In practically every instance, however, I have been assured that this idea, if it was ever generally held, has now no supporters among the mothers and wives of naval officers.

Under the common entry system introduced by Lord Fisher nomination has been entirely abolished.

It was in consequence of the constant anonymous letters and other references to myself as the General Secretary of this movement—forbidden by the Regulations—that the Secretary of the Admiralty, Sir Evan MacGregor, sent for me one day and showed me some of these communications. He said, 'Act, speak, and write temperately, and you won't be interfered with. Then the Admiralty will be able to learn at first-hand what the men of the Navy really think and really need, and you will be benefiting both the men and the Board.'

So, in spite of being considered a political wire-puller, with support in such influential quarters, victory was won, and a foundation laid which has brought the men of the hawsehole into a position where they are recognized as being level-headed, mentally fit, and respectable, as the very best class of mechanics in the country, and at the same time the most loyal servants of the Crown; while the

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warrant officers who were responsible for this great advance have won, through their commissions, to recognition of their worth to the country.

There were other privileges won during those seven years : one was the assimilation of the warrant officers' uniform with that of all other officers, which was accomplished by representations to a Committee under the presidency of the late Admiral H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, with my old China friend Mr. Sydney W. Wright as Secretary. With this I acted as the delegate from my class. Prior to the appointment of this Committee there was a costume for each class of officer, but the warrant officer was specially distinct as he had neither cocked hat nor full-dress uniform.

The disparity was accentuated on occasions of ceremony, and was brought to a head in 1890, when a specially arranged Queen's Birthday parade at Portsmouth assembled on Southsea Common. The Gunners trained the men, but when the dress rehearsal disclosed their lack of full dress, they had to work all night to train a number of young acting Sub-Lieutenants to replace themselves at the show, these being requisitioned by the Captain.

This unpleasant treatment was one of the strong reasons which determined those concerned to exert all possible pressure to cause the authorities to assimilate uniform of all classes of officers. (It may



A PRESENT-DAY GUNNER, R.N., IN FULL DRESS



1

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be mentioned as an ironical fact that the only disparaging incident in the actual programme of this much-practised ceremonial was when this same Captain fell off his horse at the moment of passing the saluting point at the head of the Brigade : the effort of holding on and saluting at the same time being too much for his unpractised equitation.)

Another most salutary reform was in regard to the description of mess ware supplied ; as down to 1895 it was customary to supply iron-pronged forks and the coarsest description of delf ware for these officers' use. That too, owing to their tactful representation and concerted though thoroughly loyal action, was remedied ; while due to the same method of reaching the ears of authority, messes for this class of officers were provided in quite small vessels, which before had never been fitted with these necessary amenities for their comfort.

## CHAPTER X

### UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

*'And duty's exiles sundered from their shore  
By leagues of heaving ocean,  
May gain a meed of recompense in store,  
From their devotion.'*

ANON.

WE sailed for Sydney in the P. & O. liner *Oceana* on 2 February, 1895, the whole of the rigging and upper deck gear being covered with ice, with stalactites hanging from tops and booms. Our party consisted of my wife and I, four children and a nurse. The voyage was as uneventful as are the majority of such passages, and but few incidents are outstanding in my memory.

Brindisi and the Australian ports were the only ones new to me, but from Gibraltar onward all was a new world to my wife and little ones. On passage we stayed long enough at Malta for me to land with my wife and show her some of the sights of that ancient home of the Knights of Jerusalem, the beauties of the great cathedral, etc., though as a fact I fancy the pertinacity of the numerous beggars made also a vivid impression.

At Port Said also we had a run on shore, and in spite of official warnings I was stupid enough to allow us both to be caught out beyond the squalid town when night fell. We hurried back, being

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tracked by some suspicious characters, but fortunately reached the shelter of the town in safety.

At Colombo, too, we landed, and visited the Bazaar, the curiosity shops, and made a trip across to the Hotel Mount Lavinia on the far ocean beach, calling *en route* at the famous temple where is the supposed relic of Buddha, as well as a life-size figure under glass of that personage. The variety of vehicles, from the springless ox-cart to the jinricksha and carriages and pairs of horses of the wealthy, were a wonderful experience for my wife.

In the Bazaar she kissed a most attractive baby in its mother's arms, much to the terror of the mother ; and what mysteries the child had subsequently to undergo to recover caste, I know not.

We had quite a number of young naval Lieutenants and Sub-Lieutenants on board, and the greater part of the fun was made by these. Among them was one rather portly youngster, and it was intensely amusing to see him attired as a child of two or three years, socks, petticoat, pink ties at the short sleeves, and a rubber soother—which last my family contributed—the winner of the prize at the inevitable fancy dress ball.

Sydney was reached in due course, and as that, ' the finest harbour in the world ', is so universally admired, there is no need to describe its beauties here.

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My post was resident officer on Spectacle Island, at the mouth of the Parramatta River, which was both a Magazine and an Ordnance Depot. There were four other families of the storekeeping staff, and a guard of twelve marines under a Lance-Sergeant, also resident. All of these had their boats for communication with the mainland, and for my convenience a service boat and an able seaman was also borne.

We quickly arranged to purchase a fine little sailing whaler, and in this my wife and I had joyous times throughout the five years of our residence in Sydney.

Our home was a bungalow built by convicts in the days when New South Wales was a penal colony: it was of stone, both exterior and interior walls being about two feet in thickness, thus ensuring a temperate atmosphere in even the hottest time of the year.

A wide veranda was built on three sides, the glorious views over the water to the surrounding land, over a mile distant, and up the Parramatta River, being quite unobstructed and delightful. A small garden on these three sides was bounded by palings and the huge hedges of geraniums which grow in this country; and outside these there stretched a flat, uncovered at low tide, on which a vast bed of oysters flourished, fed by the scour of

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the river. It is seldom one can be stationed officially in such a fairyland and with such material luxuries as oyster beds in the front garden, yet this was our pleasant lot for five happy years. We initiated a plan for dispatching a bag of these bivalves to each officers' mess upon the arrival of the warships from sea, and they were an appreciated luxury.

About 1,000 yards distant is Cockatoo Island (Biloela of the aborigines), a high rock upon which was the original jail for unruly convicts (in our time used as a place of detention for short-sentence offenders). Around the central rock was a plateau, not much above high-water mark, with two excellent dry docks. The smaller of these, we were told, had been cut out of the solid rock by gangs of convicts in chains, by chisel and hammer, in days before the introduction of blasting. Here was established the colonial dockyard.

Equidistant from these two was a tiny islet below the rocks of the mainland, Balmain, called Cat Island; we were told by some of the oldest residents that on many occasions they had in the old days come down at 8 a.m. to see some convicts receive floggings, seized up to frames on the islet.

Calling at Cockatoo was a service of steamers from Parramatta town to the main wharf at Sydney, and a journey in these was a constant delight, for the many bays and coves which bisect and inter-

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sect the harbour are each more beautiful than the last.

My wife had a somewhat trying experience one night when she had been visiting friends in the town, and returned by the last steamer. It was the custom of the Captain of the steamer, on disembarking passengers at Cockatoo for Spectacle Island, to give two blasts on the steam whistle as a signal for a boat. On this night he left the wharf and failed to give the signal. The sentry and I both noted there was none, so I came to the conclusion she had remained with our friends for the night, and returned to my reading, then finally went calmly to bed.

Meantime, my wife was ploughing her way around the eerie and wholly unlighted island in the hope of finding a house with a friendly light beaming from its windows, or some other sign of waking humanity, but in vain, nor could she make herself heard by calling to Spectacle Island because of the high wind. At last, after some two hours of unsuccessful peregrinations on the plateau, and almost deciding to try to sleep in the open waiting-shed, in spite of her fears she pluckily decided to climb up the rocky path toward the jail, and after some time found herself in familiar surroundings by the house of the dockmaster, whom we knew. On her knock at the door, that kindly functionary at length appeared

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at his window in night attire, but quickly dressed, manned his boat, and sculled the weary partner of my joys to Spectacle, where she arrived somewhere about 3 a.m., to find her husband peacefully sleeping.

On the fourth side of our bungalow was a fine kitchen garden and large run for fowls and goats, so that many wants were provided for.

Living was phenomenally cheap. One could purchase a live sheep for six shillings (the pelt, horns and hoofs to be returned), or mutton, even the best parts, was but  $1\frac{1}{2}d.$  per pound, or  $9d.$  for the whole hind quarter of lamb. Butter  $5d.$  per pound, and so forth ; but manufactured articles, clothing, etc., were correspondingly highly priced.

At various periods on the island the men had for pets a monkey, a dingo, and a wallaby. I am not sure which was the greatest nuisance : the monkey when loose would in an hour do more mischief than could be remedied in a week. The dingo one evening inside of five minutes killed forty hens, while the fright of finding a huge wallaby rushing through the house and settling on one's bed was not a happy experience, yet this happened several times. All the same, these animals when properly secured were the cause of much fun and amusement.

Almost from the first day of taking over charge, I was able to make many alterations from an old and



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traditional procedure which it had occurred to no one before to vary. For example, when a ship, or ships, returned to Sydney it had been customary to send in a demand for the munitions required for replacement. Then the Ordnance officer in charge requisitioned the vessels for an appropriate number of men to fill cartridges and shells with powder, etc., and the ships supplied these and waited until the quantity of stores required was ready. If more than one ship came in at one time there was, of course, much congestion, but the principle was to distribute the labour, and therefore cost, of the establishment fairly over the ships in the Squadron.

What amazed me was the fact that all the reserves of ammunition for the fleet in magazines and storehouses lay in their constituent items ; powder in barrels, empty shells, cartridge bags, and fuses in storehouses. Had war with a Great Power taken place the ammunition to replace that in the ships—which last might easily have been fired away in one general engagement—would have occupied, by night and day labour, not less than three months' effort ; and meantime disaster might have ensued. In order to terminate this critical situation, which seemed not to have been noticed by anyone, from the Commander-in-Chief down, I proposed to the senior naval officer the employment of a couple of officers and forty men to live on the island and work con-

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tinuously until every shell and cartridge was ready for immediate issue to the fleet. Captain W. McC. F. Castle at once saw the vital necessity of this operation, and made arrangements for the party asked for ; and after six months' strenuous application to the task there was not an ounce of loose powder remaining in the magazines : while all subsequent receipts from England were filled as soon after arrival as possible.

Thereafter demands for ammunition were complied with within an hour, and the gratification of the Commander-in-Chief, the Captains and gunnery officers of the ships was full repayment for the extra efforts which had resulted in this preparedness.

It had been the custom for the residents on Spectacle Island to treat Sunday as an idle day, the only person properly dressed being the sentry on duty, while card-playing and similar recreations filled their time.<sup>1</sup> My wife and I conferred on the matter and decided that without issuing any orders it would be well for me to give a strong lead to bring affairs into line with what was right, as well as usual, in the Service. To this end a large receiving store was cleared up on Saturday afternoons, arranged with seats and books, and our family harmonium taken there. Getting into touch with

<sup>1</sup> Also we learned that at the nearest township (Balmain) the Marines from Spectacle Island had become a by-word.

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all the clergy and ministers of the surrounding townships it was arranged for a roster of these to come over in turn and conduct a service. Notice having been given of this the bell was rung at the proper time, and every soul on the island attended. This custom was observed throughout the five years of our stay, and at the request of the men themselves was extended to the evenings also, when they brought their friends with them, and we sometimes had a congregation of two hundred.

Arising also from this, and because the men expressed a wish to that effect, fortnightly entertainments, amateur theatricals and so forth were arranged in the same building. A hinged stage was built and scenes and drop provided, which made social matters most interesting for all of us, while the numbers of friends attending from the shore was evidence of the quality of these entertainments. The most useful end they served, however, was the good feeling engendered in our small community.

To keep to social matters. As the harbour is infested with sharks, a bathing-place was arranged by securing together several tarpaulins and stretching them from the outer corner of the main wharf to the shore, thus enclosing a triangular space we hoped was secure from these intruders. This had been generally availed of for some weeks, when one day, at a time when four or five of the men were

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bathing, a shark rose and turned on its back to attack the Sergeant of Marines.

It being thus clear that the improvised arrangement was unsafe, I made an application to the Engineer-in-Chief of the New South Wales Government—to whom the island belongs—for the erection of a proper swimming-bath. As also there was on both sides of the island a considerable stretch of shallow water, I included a requisition for the reclamation of this, and the addition of several new buildings for storage of ammunition and stores.

The Engineer-in-Chief came to inspect the site, and I ventured to suggest to him that if a mason could be assigned to my staff, it would be possible to arrange for the loan of lighters and men, the expense charged to the Imperial Government, when, utilizing the stone and soil then being raised at the Balmain Coal Mine only about a mile away, and which was being dumped below the rocks, the extension could be carried out.

All this was agreed to, and finally executed, and about an acre and a half of additional land recovered, faced with walls. Then there was a bathing-place also built, and to the dressing-huts put up close to it the residents on the island (by means of funds obtained by the presentation of plays in several of the surrounding townships) raised an excellent little recreation-room, nicely furnished with papers, books,

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piano, etc., which was a great boon both for themselves as well as the men of the fleet, who when working at the stores, carrying out torpedo practice, etc., used the island.

Several new buildings were also put up, and the total amount expended by the Colonial Government during my tenure of the post was close upon £20,000. With regard to these operations the naval authorities had nothing to do ; and upon each succeeding visit of the Admiral, he used jocosely to remark, ‘ Well, Capper, how much new work have you got to show me ? ’

One of the privileges offered by the New South Wales Government was the occasional grant of free passes over the railway for naval officers, and I secured one each for my wife and myself for a trip to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains (so called on account of the blue mist generally enveloping them) : it was a very enjoyable change indeed.

We passed through Wagga-Wagga, and saw the identical butcher’s shop in which the famous claimant to the Tichborne estate, Arthur Orton, was for long employed. While at Katoomba, and also at Rylstone, we had trips to points of interest, and from the last named my wife took a buggy ride of thirty miles with a clergyman who was visiting some squatters in a distant hamlet, thus experiencing the vicissitudes of life under which these pioneers of

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Empire live, and also the regular—if exciting—methods of ministering in spiritual things which backwoods clergymen have to carry out.

The wild views and splendid vacant spaces, such as is Govet's Leap near Katoomba, and various other preserved points of special beauty, are made accessible for tourists by steps and ladders arranged under Government supervision ; while at camping spots facilities for ' boiling the billy ' are invariably provided : an amenity which British trippers at home would probably appreciate.

We went on another occasion to the Jenolan Caves, which are a magnificent freak of nature, and here the Government also takes control of transport, inspection of the caves, provision of guides, overalls, lights, and, as at least one night must be spent at the caves, of accommodation for sleeping.

Traversing these marvellous groves, avenues, halls, and cathedrals of stalactites and stalagmites, and more particularly when illuminated by coloured lights, one obtains a new conception of the wonders of the world we live in. Here at the caves we experienced the first snowstorm we had seen in Australia : many of our fellow-travellers seeing snow for the first time in their lives.

Young as the country is, there is still much of romance in the story of New South Wales, and sad as was its beginning as a penal colony, there were

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some of the earliest settlers who made excellent careers from these most unpromising surroundings. For example, we learned that the origin of Garden Island, now the Imperial naval depot, situated about a mile inside the entrance to Port Jackson, and opposite its busiest entrepôt, was as follows :

When the first settlers arrived and the Governor, Captain Phillips, had decided to locate the infant colony where Sydney now stands, they were met by potential starvation as the food-supply ship had been wrecked, and the stores were not sufficient to support them until the arrival of a second ship. One of the life convicts, however, was a man who understood agriculture, and he volunteered, if given the necessary assistance and the cereals and vegetables available, to raise a crop in time to avoid disaster.

He was given all he asked and chose the island as a garden. All his efforts were successful, and within a couple of years he had fields of produce flourishing on the mainland, while he was appointed the principal farmer of the colony. When Governor Phillips was about to be relieved he sent for this man and, after expressing his gratitude, asked what he could do for him, but as his sentence was a life one there could be no manumission.

The farmer was a far-seeing man, and small as was the beginning then made he predicted the rise

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of a great city where they stood, while on the opposite shore of the harbour would be the villadom of the well-to-do. So he asked permission to peg out a claim of two miles of the water front on the opposite bank and double that distance inland. This was given him, and is now covered with suburban houses, remains in his own family, and is probably worth a million pounds.

Fortunes were easily made and lost in earlier days of the colony, not least in what is designated as 'jumping claims'. A predecessor of mine in the post I held was in the habit of taking an evening walk in a township about a mile from the island. Here he saw erected on vacant lots of land official notices from the local municipality warning the owner that unless rates in arrears were paid by a stated date the land would be 'resumed' (seized).

One such lot was in the main road, and opposite to it lived in a 'humpy'—that is, the original log hut of the settlement—an old squatter, with whom my friend had a nodding acquaintance, and an occasional pound of naval tobacco went into the squatter's pouch.

Interrogated one day as to when he had last seen the owner of the land, he replied :

'I ain't seen the feller as owns that lot on 'es land fer many a day.'



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‘ Perhaps he has gone to the diggings ? ’ suggested my friend.

‘ Me’be, me’be.’

‘ I’ve a good mind to pay the arrears and jump the claim myself,’ said the other. ‘ I could put up a dozen good houses on that site.’

‘ Fine spot fer building ! ’ said the squatter.

Briefly, my predecessor, having paid the arrears of rates due, set his two sons, who were builders, erecting a row of houses in pairs, letting each pair as they were completed. On the larger lot left, after twelve houses had been built, was a more palatial residence intended for himself. When the glazier had put in the windows of this house and it was nearing completion my friend received a letter from a solicitor representing the owner of the plot requesting an account of all rent received from his client’s houses, and warning him not to trespass on his land in the future.

Correspondence and interviews followed, but it was some time before he could discover who was the person who owned the land. When he did he was exasperated to learn that his acquaintance the squatter was the artful owner for whom he had constructed thirteen houses for nothing, and incidentally squandered all his life savings in the transaction.

Another story was of a man who left Sydney

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when there was a gold rush in South Australia. Landed in Adelaide, he found only one long street of wooden shanties, and spending the last night in a so-called hotel, found himself the only man of the party with a sovereign left in his purse, which incidentally was the price of a bottle of brandy.

Urged to stand treat with his last coin he refused again and again. At last one man said, ' If you'll shout I'll transfer my lot here in Adelaide in exchange ', forcing the certificate into his hand. So when the document was duly signed and witnessed he put it in his pocket and paid for the brandy.

The party left next morning, and it was two and a half years before the Sydney man returned : he then found that like Aladdin's palace the shanties had disappeared and where they stood is now the stately King William Street, the pride of the city. On the site of the hotel was a large building bearing the same name. Here he inquired for the trunk he had left in custody, and producing the receipt it was delivered to him. Quite penniless, he took out the best suit it contained with the purpose of raising enough money on it to procure a meal, and in the pocket discovered the certificate for the land, which he had entirely forgotten. With this he visited a solicitor and asked, ' Is it of any value ? ' The lawyer traced the lot upon the city plan, and then informed his client that it represented a plot of

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ground upon which the municipal authorities had erected a town hall, the Government the General Post Office, with other buildings, while the main part was laid out as a public park. He was assured that substantial compensation was recoverable, and in the end proceedings were withdrawn upon payment of a sum approximating to £100,000.

A personal experience was my meeting an amiable old gentleman who was decidedly prosperous, seeing he was in the habit of driving about the city in a coach driven by a coachman in livery, and with a footman similarly arrayed. He lived in a house situated in the best part of Sydney, and when he entertained me it was in the most unexceptionable way.

One of his peculiarities was that he invariably excused himself, no matter what was in progress, at 9 p.m.

Once I was in his company when we were seen by my friend the business manager of Messrs. Williamson & Musgrove, owners of the theatres in the principal Australian cities. Said my friend when next I met him: 'Do you know who that gentleman is I saw you with the other day?' I mentioned his name and said he was an acquaintance. 'Well, friend,' was the response, 'you ought to know that he is one of the last "lifers" we have left in the colony.' So I presume his nine o'clock

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engagement was connected with his periodical report to the police.

Yet, in spite of the crime which resulted in his life sentence, he had managed to become one of the wealthiest men in the country.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE QUARTER-DECK

*'It is not art but heart that wins the wide world over.'*  
ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

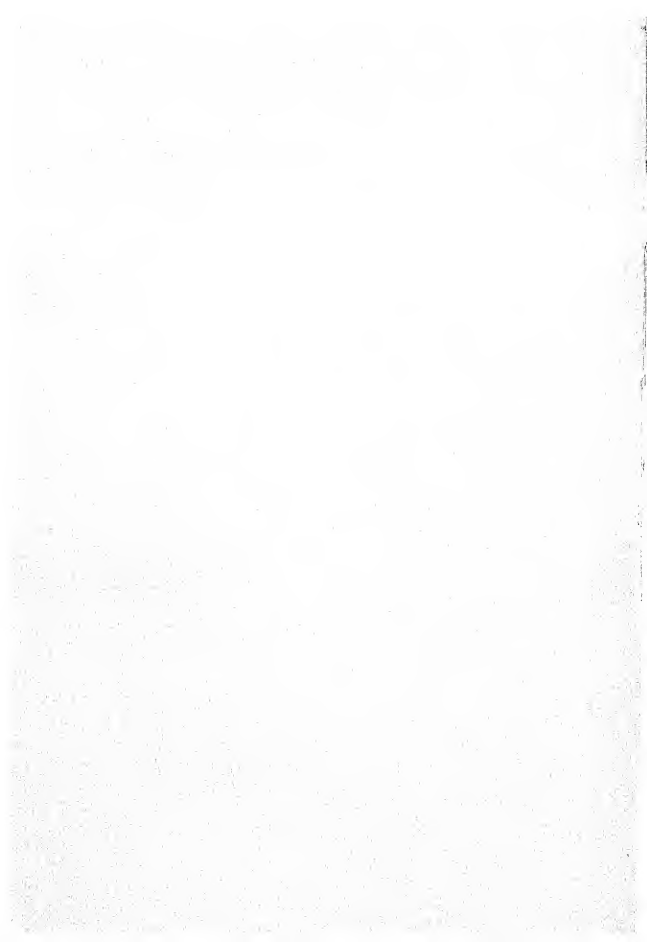
MY wife and I made a point of cultivating the social side for all the warrant officers on the station, and throughout our service there we held weekly reunions where, with civilian friends, the ladies predominating, these officers had a taste of home life. In these affairs we also had numbers of other officers joining us, and have since heard from time to time how much these social events were appreciated.

As we had associations with the proprietors and managers of the principal theatres, we were also often able to secure the loan of the vice-regal box and combine a dozen officers and their partners in this enjoyable method of spending an evening.

Early in my tenure of this important appointment, notification was received from home that cordite charges for all the ships' guns on the station were being dispatched per a sailing vessel on passage via Cape of Good Hope ; and in the same vessel was a complete re-armament of small arms, .303-in. rifles, spare parts and ammunition to be issued in exchange for the .45-in. Martini-Henry rifles then in use in the fleet.



MRS. HENRY D. CAPPER, IN 1899



## THE QUARTER-DECK

This was a large order, as my office staff consisted, besides myself, of one clerk and a pensioned N.C.O., R.M. The Admiral caused an additional marine writer to be lent, while a second most capable civilian clerk was entered from the city.

After looking into the matter of accommodation for these new supplies, I rang the Admiral up on the telephone and made suggestions to the effect that he should empower me to dispose of as many black powder charges, Martini-Henry rifles, and ammunition as possible to the then seven colonies of Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and the Administrators of the South Sea Islands, so that on arrival of the ship with the new armament stores our magazines would be nearly empty for their reception. Also that as large a quantity as possible of the ammunition on board the ships should be disposed of by practice firing during the three or four months at our disposal.

The Commander-in-Chief thought the scheme a good one, and agreed.

Among the many friends we had made in the colony was William Hawtrey (elder brother of Charles of 'The Private Secretary' fame). On the evening of the 2nd January, 1896, and while a merry party of ships' officers and our civilian friends were enjoying themselves in the new recreation-room, I was summoned to the telephone, and found Hawtrey



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at the other end. Said he, 'Capper, have you heard of the German Emperor's telegram to the Boers?' We had not heard of it, so he gave the details. We joined in a laugh at the Kaiser's 'cheek' and I went back to our guests.

When, however, a couple of hours later, there was time to think out the implications, it occurred to me that there was considerable danger of an Anglo-German war, and I had deliberately depleted the ammunition reserves of the fleet, with supplies only obtainable at the other side of the world. At the moment no vessel had her full allowance of cartridges and shell and the depot was practically empty, while no notification of our supply ship having passed the Cape of Good Hope had been received.

We had no steamboat, nor was the senior naval officer at Garden Island get-at-able, and I paced the island that night in agony of mind because of what then appeared stupid advice to the Admiral. Early in the morning a steamboat was chartered, and the Captain in charge located on the North Shore, some miles inland at a friend's bungalow. Hearing my story, he consoled me with the view that in case of belligerency between Britain and Germany he would suggest to the Admiral to try me by court-martial as the Ordnance Officer who had caused the loss of the fleet—there were then four German warships in Eastern waters.

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When I put my plan before him he at once agreed. It was then the day on which the P. & O. or Orient liner sailed from London. As in Australia we were nine hours ahead of London time, I suggested a wire to Whitehall requesting that in that vessel should be at once embarked supplies of black-powder cartridges and .45-in. ammunition for replacements of our stocks.

This was done, and the next day came a cable to say supplies were *en route* as requested, the vessel having been delayed some hours for the purpose. There were several uneasy weeks before these arrived, and as a fact the supply ship with the new stores came in less than a fortnight after the steamer had discharged her supplementary cargo. But the earliest of my grey hairs appeared during this period !

(Later, in 1904, at Sheerness, where Admiral Pearson was the Commander-in-Chief at the Nore, and I again serving under him as Lieutenant of the Yard, we had many a laugh over this time of tension, and my chief admitted that he, too, shared with me considerable anxiety as to our ammunition-less condition.)

When we had collected all the powder charges from the fleet a ship was chartered to convey these, together with the stock sent out, as above related through the Suez Canal to us, to England. We had

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in addition some thousands of stands of .45-inch Martini-Henry rifles, bayonets, and spare parts. As the value of these either broken up on the spot or sent back to England would be less than the freightage charge, it was decided to take the whole lot to sea and throw them overboard. Many were quite new, but it was impossible to sell them to a potential enemy and the various Colonial Governments wanted the new rifle: so this (apparently costly) method was the cheapest in the end and was carried out.

One day we gave a garden party on the island to quite a large number of our friends, an event in which we included those also of the four families of the staff resident on the island; a band and dancing on the green being one among many amenities.

The landing-place was a sloping glacis alongside which the boats came. One of our guests, a well-known planter, in stepping from the boat to the shore, unfortunately dropped his valuable gold watch, which he had held loose in his hand. As soon as this accident was made known I set one of the seamen to dive for the lost piece of jewellery, and after much effort, and quite half an hour subsequent to the loss, he recovered it. We then, to our great surprise and amusement, found it ticking cheerfully as though nothing had happened. It was then immersed in a basin of kerosene oil for a

## THE QUARTER-DECK

further hour, taken out and drained, when it was taken away by its owner apparently nothing the worse for its bath.

We very naturally suggested to the planter that it should be designated a 'Waterbury'.

It was fortunate this accident had not taken place at the moment one of my mischievous children was experimenting with the ornamental piles of round shot placed around the landing-place.

These had been constantly disappearing, and no reason could be discovered for their diminution. When, however, the diver was searching for the lost watch he retrieved all the lost cannon balls, and then we learned that it was an amusement to detach these one by one and see them roll down the slope to splash into the sea.

At Sydney, as at every other place I served prior to the war, there was the inevitable German espionage under way, and that subject of the Kaiser, who thought he had wormed out all the secrets of our little establishment by social intercourse with myself and family, must have felt like kicking himself when fourteen years later he discovered in the war what a lot of useless information he had transmitted to his bureau and how completely he had been fooled.

During the third year of our stay in Sydney an officer, retired from the Royal Navy and employed

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as Commandant of the Naval Forces of the (then)  
Colony of Queensland, Commander Walton Drake,  
R.N., was attached to my office for a month's course  
of instruction in Ordnance Stores.

We formed a friendship which resulted later in  
his suggesting that I should apply for appointment  
in his stead as he was securing another post under  
the same government. He also asked me to recruit  
for him a few suitable persons for posts as Gunners  
and Chief Gunners in his force.

After taking the Admiral's opinion, which was  
favourable to my candidature, I duly applied, and  
my claims were considered, the Commander-in-  
Chief recommending me. I understand the matter  
was referred to a Committee of five to select one  
from two applicants, the second being another  
retired naval officer then commanding a small  
cruiser of another colony. That officer took the  
trouble to pay a visit to Brisbane (which I did not),  
and bringing his personal influence to bear was  
appointed to the vacancy by vote of three of the  
five Committee men. He died recently with the  
rank of Admiral.

I did, however, supply some volunteers for the  
junior vacancies, one of whom—then a chief petty  
officer—subsequently rose to be a Commander in  
the Commonwealth Navy, and served afloat in that  
rank in the war.

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The five years spent at Sydney were full of interest. The post was a responsible one, but all the more appreciated because of the relatively important status given me by both the Admirals who in turn commanded the station. Both of them got into touch with me on my return home, and it is a pleasant recollection that each of these distinguished officers gave me his real friendship, and not the usual recognition between an Admiral and a Gunner.

I was sent to Sydney, not as a Gunner in charge of Stores, but specifically as Ordnance Officer, the difference being considerable both as to privileges on passage and status under the Ordnance Regulations which, at that time, governed the Naval Ordnance Depots. This was important, as on the station was one of the officers trained as Firemaster, whose duty it was to test all ammunition and examine all guns afloat and ashore. This officer—two such served in succession—had an office on the island and was more frequently there than on board the ships, but was not in executive charge of the island and its residents. The position was understood by each of these officers, and we never at any time had even the smallest friction. On the other hand, the various Captains in charge (there were four in succession) could not understand why the usual service rule, that the senior executive must be in

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command, should not apply where there was a Lieutenant and a Gunner, and some friction with these, who would address my correspondence through the Lieutenant Gun Examiner, resulted, in which happily I was never personally involved, and at the end we parted in the happiest spirit.

My relief arrived in the early months of 1900, and in view of an expected interesting family event arrangements were made for our passage to England by a Blue Funnel vessel, s.s. *Yarra-wonga* (sister ship to the ill-fated *Waratah*), round the Cape, so as to avoid an accouchement in the Red Sea.

We occupied more than half the available passenger accommodation, and with the few other saloon voyagers and the acting ship's doctor and his wife, formed a merry party.

One of the ship's characteristics was that she was full of rats, to destroy which apparently no effort was made ; and I had to lie awake at night in order to cross to the opposite cabins to drive the rats off my sleeping children.

The doctor and I used, in the dusk of the evening, to sit on the poop-deck and make bets as to how many rats would be seen to climb certain stanchions up to a locker in which the stock of potatoes was kept.

Unfortunately for us these rodents got into the locker below the seat in the cabin occupied by my wife and me and destroyed the garments, hats and

## THE QUARTER-DECK

shoes, which had been very carefully prepared for my six children to land in in London.

We called at Durban and discharged there some 120 steerage passengers, all volunteers for service in the South African War then raging, and whom, with a tactlessness which would have brought him to a court-martial had he been a naval officer, the Master had worked up almost to a mutiny before we reached that port.

I was on shore for twenty-four hours, and lodged in the hotel where Colonel Willoughby (Dr. Jameson's colleague in the Raid) was staying, as also Colonel Bethune, who was raising the corps of horsemen which did such splendid service in the war. Thereafter we called at Cape Town, which afforded me an opportunity of taking the train to Simons Town and visiting the Chief Gunner in charge of Ordnance there, Mr. F. J. M. Johnson, and from him I learned of my promotion to Chief Gunner.

Here this officer showed me the quarters under his charge for detention of Boer prisoners, just below his official residence. He told me the difficulty he had in inducing his charges to bathe in the sea, and said that one old farmer actually went on his knees to him and declared he had not had his back wetted for thirty years, and if forced into the water would die. Johnson, however, was adamant, the old man



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was carried in, and so enjoyed the experience that afterwards he asked to be allowed to join the second batch of bathers in the evening and have two bathes each day.

We sailed from Cape Town after five days' stay, during which we experienced the war rancour of a Boer resident in the suburbs of the town. My wife and I had gone out to the limits of the tramway line and then walked on for some distance.

To obtain a cup of tea we called at a teashop and ordered some, which was quickly served and excellent in quality ; thereupon we called for a second cup each and complimented the somewhat surly landlord on the merits of his brew. When leaving, I asked the price and was astonished at being charged two shillings and sixpence for each cup of tea, and on protesting was told ' that is the price to all roonecks '.

In the Atlantic, as in the Indian Ocean, my wife had spent her days on deck in a corner, with her chair lashed to the hand-rail round the companion hatch, and this was the centre of all fun and merriment of passengers and officers, her sense of humour and high spirits infecting everyone, and all the passengers on that voyage developed into friends. Two have since come all the way from South Africa to pay us a visit.

It was off Las Palmas that our child was born, as

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usual in such cases the mascot of the crew. We, however, successfully avoided the general wish of the officers to name her after the ship, 'Yarra-wonga' being a somewhat unsuitable designation to carry through life.

So as to obtain the most airy position the so-called hospital (built temporarily on the boat-deck to comply with transport regulations, because of the considerable number of steerage passengers who were carried from Australia to Durban, volunteers for the South African War) was utilized for my wife's accouchement.

It was nothing but a large packing-case with one berth, and about the same width of floor space. Made of one-inch planks, the cracks between let in light and wind.

With the willing aid of the officers—we were all one large family aft, less the Captain—we lined it with a cheerful patterned cretonne, added a picture or two and a mirror, and set up a lodge or lobby outside with a side curtain so that the interior could not be seen unless one entered. Here the child was born.

The third night after, it came on to blow heavily, and the officer of the watch thought it wise to have the awning furled, which had covered that part of the boat-deck since leaving Sydney. Thereafter heavy rain fell, and at 2 a.m. a very wet nurse (whose

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bed had been spread on the deck space beside the  
cot of the mother and child) came down to inform  
me that all three were saturated by the rain, while  
the ship was rolling heavily.

To remove the patient to the cabin below was  
impossible. Consequently I carried my wife along  
the heaving deck, through pouring rain, lightning  
and thunder, the nurse following with the babe, and  
laid her on the cushions in the smoking-room,  
which, in fact, was the space around the companion  
ladder to the saloon. We gave them dry garments  
and bedding, and with spare blankets screened them  
from public gaze. Here for some eight further days  
my wife remained with her baby : the merry band  
of officers and doctors carrying on jocular conversa-  
tions through the blanket screens until she emerged  
again.

## CHAPTER XII

### AFT!

*'Till in all lands, and through all human story,  
The path of Duty be the way to Glory.'*

TENNYSON.

AFTER a gratifying reception by the then Captain of the *Excellent*, Captain (afterwards Admiral of the Fleet) W. H. May, who said he had had letters from both the Admirals and several Captains of the Australian Squadron commending my work, and would take care I had a good and suitable post, my foreign service leave commenced and was to extend to three months.

Long, however, before this terminated I was summoned again to the Gunnery Establishment on Whale Island, and there informed I was appointed Chief Gunner of the Gunnery School at Sheerness and was to join the following day in an unexpected vacancy. I had then been thirteen years out of uniform, immense changes in status and position had taken place with the men, with which I was unacquainted, and there was much for the practical executive officer of an establishment with some 2,000 men to learn, as well as a good deal to unlearn.

I welcomed the task as it was one in which my ideals of duty first, and then the improvement of the men of the lower deck, could be exercised, and

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went to the rather difficult work with a cheerful heart.

The two years spent at that School were full of opportunities for doing little things to help on the constant upward trend of the men in social and educational matters : the vast difference in whom, since thirteen years before when last associated with them, I found most remarkable and stimulating ; and so far as was humanly possible I missed no possibility of assisting this healthy progress.

With respect to the character and status of the men with whom I was much in touch (being practically responsible for the interior economy of the establishment) it was clear that the Education Act of 1870—passed after my own entry into the Service—had had a considerable influence, illiterates being entirely unknown, while the habits, associations, and general character of the great body of the men demonstrated how great was their social advance.

The greater part of the large numbers who passed through the School was of an extremely respectable type. Unlike their predecessors of my early days they were not found, when on shore, in the lowest resorts of naval towns ; and showed much more interest in hockey, football, cricket, and even in golf and tennis, than in the denizens of the slums, whom their predecessors of thirty years before would have forgathered with.

## A F T !

Like the thrifty dockyard workmen, the senior men belonged to Co-operative and Building Societies, married men in large numbers either owning, or being in process of paying for, their own houses. Sailors make excellent, home-loving husbands, and both in the Chatham area as in Sheerness took a keen interest in the local affairs of the towns in which they were ratepayers ; in several instances pensioners were elected to serve as representatives upon the local governing bodies.

In brief, the men of the lower deck had developed from the lowest class in the social scale into a decent and self-respecting body of men with much higher ideals and a more robust sense of loyalty to King and Country than any corresponding section of the wage-earning classes with whom I had come in contact. Less selfish for their own interests, just as generous as were the old-time ignorant men they had succeeded, warm-hearted in every charitable cause, and in fact a body to be proud of.

Naturally the number of ambitious and studious men was much greater than in my early days, and it was a pleasure to address little lectures in the Theoretical Class to the young fellows who were studying there to qualify for Warrant Rank, and to show them how many great Admirals had graduated as they were doing from the lowest rung of the naval ladder.

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

About the year 1898 a certain Second Sea Lord who had quite misconceived the tag 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing', and thought that education was likely to render British seamen inefficient fighting men, exercised his power by withdrawing all naval schoolmasters from sea-going ships, and largely reducing those in harbour vessels. Instead of retarding the advance of education it had precisely the opposite effect, for at once several young officers instituted in their ships night classes for any who cared to avail themselves of their tuition, and where the naval schoolmaster taught a few men these voluntary instructors had dozens, greatly stimulated by their officers' interest in their welfare.

Moreover it has since been amply proved that that Admiral was hopelessly wrong, for with a standard of education greatly in advance of that which obtained in 1898 the fleetmen in 1914-19 demonstrated that neither in courage, devotion to duty, or in achievement were they one whit inferior to the 'tarry breeks' of Nelson more than a century earlier, whose lack of education might have appealed to the Admiral referred to.

That the Admirallissimo of the Grand Fleet<sup>1</sup> thought otherwise was proved by his submission to the Admiralty to send to every ship a competent

<sup>1</sup> Earl Jellicoe.

## A F T !

schoolmaster ; and many thus sent were university men of a class hitherto appointed only for the instruction of young officers. The impetus thus given to educational matters is seen in the fact that whereas not long since no naval schoolmaster could reach a higher rating than chief petty officer, to-day all are officers and some with commissions up to the rank of Commander and Lieut.-Commander : more in fact than the ' Tree of Promotion ' <sup>1</sup> dared to adumbrate.

My own messmates were a happy lot—some thirty in number, and I reckon all of these who survive as my very real friends.

It will be convenient here to remark that placed as I then was as head of a large number of officers of my own class, and being as keen as ever to see some avenue for advance opened for the fit among these to higher positions in the Service, the undoubted unsuitability of some of those about me for holding higher rank became very apparent, and this to some extent shattered my ideals.

Hitherto my lot had been cast where I was associated with some of the most capable and accomplished men produced from the lower deck. Here there was a certain number of such, but also there were others of quite another calibre, who with undoubted professional ability and Service experience

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* page 129.



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were yet quite unfit for, nor indeed desired, any social advance.

Some were men for whom the latter was a sealed book. More than one showed in their home lives the impossibility of advancement. One particularly flagrant case was a person who appeared to vie with his wife in disgraceful conduct. As the chain is measured by its weakest link, so I am afraid the upward progress of my class was retarded by such individuals, and in too many cases we were measured as a whole at an average depreciated by such colleagues.

This was (and is) due mainly to too early marriages, when the individual has not raised himself to a status where educated and refined women are available as partners in life. Undoubtedly the Admiralty were right when introducing the Mate system of promotion, the Board intimating that—other things being equal—single candidates would be preferred. Certainly in my own experience there have been many disasters because the distaff side has failed to keep step with the breadwinner.

At this time the members of the Warrant Officers' Society most generously recognized Mr. T. Holman's and my own work for the class by presenting us with life membership in the Royal United Service Institution : an entirely unexpected and most gratifying testimony of their esteem ; and it has

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been a valued privilege ever since to avail myself of the splendid library and other amenities of that Institution.

It came at an opportune moment, too, as we had been collaborating in articles in the Press on the subject of training men of the Mercantile Marine as reserves for the Fleet in case of war. Shortly after our election to membership of the Institution, Admiral the Rt. Hon. Sir J. Dalrymple Hay, Bart., delivered a lecture upon this subject, and we both joined in the discussion, the Chairman, Admiral Sir N. Bowden-Smith, warmly welcoming us as the first representatives of our class to appear in the theatre of the Institution, and thanking us for practical constructive criticism.

Thereafter, by exchange, I passed under the Captain of Sheerness Dockyard as executive officer in the Dockyard Reserve : a department which was abolished by Lord Fisher some eight years later, though when I served in it it had very useful functions.

To it were entrusted all vessels which were being brought forward for commission : these the Reserve staff cleaned up after the workmen had departed, and the acceptance by that department was a sort of receipt to the Dockyard for completed work. These ships were then stored and equipped with boats, spare spars, etc., ready for the pennant. The D.R. had also charge of vessels paid off but not ready for

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commission ; carried out steam, navigational, and  
other trials, with many other duties of an executive  
character.

The work was responsible, while it was an appreciated duty to sit, in the frequent absence of my chief (a Commander) at the daily ' Readings '—a sort of cabinet—of the Captain Superintendent.

Shortly after taking up this post I was one day standing at the door of my office, when Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, then Financial Secretary of the Admiralty, passed. He at once came over and shook hands, remarking that we had not met since my House of Commons days ; then he added, ' Well, Capper, we shall soon win those commissions for you now Sir John Fisher and I are together on the Board.' I confessed that after more than thirty years' effort hope deferred had made my heart sick, but he laughed genially, and in parting added, ' Bide a wee, just bide a wee ! '

Sure enough, within a very short time came one of Admiral Fisher's ' private and confidential ' letters, directing me to confer with my colleagues and prepare a list of 100 appointments for officers of the rank of Lieutenant promoted from the ' chiefs ' of the warrant class : with an eye to avoiding the necessity of as many as possible being required to enter ward-room messes, where there were some officers who objected to such new associations.

## A F T !

In collaboration with Mr. Holman and other leaders such a list was prepared and forwarded, and thereafter the few officers in the secret waited with much anxiety for the result.

Then on Christmas morning, 1902, while at home with my family, came from my old chief in Australia, then the Admiral Commanding at the Nore, Sir Hugo Pearson, a telegram :

‘ Congrats. Your aim is at last achieved.’

Later in the newspapers we read the Memorandum of Lord Selborne which, including many other reforms, made provision for promotion of 4 per cent of the ‘ chiefs ’ of each of the (then) five classes of warrant officers to the rank of Lieutenant.

Thus the ‘ Tarpaulin ’ tradition suspended eighty-five years before was reintroduced in a seniority form, and not selectively as we had first requested. But at any rate the ideal of my service life was accomplished at long last.

My own turn for advancement came twelve months later, and the letters of congratulation from friends, acquaintances, and even from strangers, from Admirals down, in the service, as well as from many civilians, were a revelation of the number of eyes which had been fixed upon our efforts for naval reform.

I was naturally very proud of my commission, but

## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

sat down and carefully pondered on the whole position. The ideal had been reached after thirty years, dating from the rebuff of my cousin : years full of strenuous effort, constant thought and study, and very earnest endeavour by pen and practical example. Was it worth all this personal expense and labour, in which indeed my wife had borne a very considerable share ?

For myself there remained some six years of commissioned rank on the active list to enjoy what had been won—few others of my colleagues had anything like so long to serve before retirement. With a large and young family to educate and put out in the world in a status not inferior to those of my relatives, there loomed ahead many years of further effort when others of my age and rank would enjoy their ease.

Would it not have been better to have eschewed ‘ divine discontent ’ and have soldiered on in the old service position with its relatively smaller strain upon one in the evening of life : satisfied for both myself and my children with a lesser social status, and correspondingly smaller responsibilities ? Would this have been for the advantage of my girls and boys ?

That was the purely personal view, but no man lives to himself alone. What of colleagues, and of those others who in procession were to tread this trail of progress which by our labours we had

## A F T !

blazed for them ? On that day there were seventy commissioned officers of ' hawsehole origin ', and a corresponding number of junior ranks and ratings who (with their families) had benefited by the promotion at the top to step up one rank as filling in vacancies occurred—say 900 men in all. What of the benefit to these ?

After all, this was but the seed-time ; the ' Tree of Promotion ' we had prepared, which made provision for opening to practically all the men on the lower deck—now excluded—opportunity to rise to the quarter-deck, was, I had been told by the Second Sea Lord, ' under consideration '.<sup>1</sup> This acted upon would give to thousands of men, their wives and families, new and better social conditions of life, and would open to all *who cared to fit themselves for advancement* some of the advantages I and mine had now secured. Also it was bound to give such an uplift in status and character to the lower-deck personnel as would be of infinite value to the Navy we loved, and therefore vastly benefit the nation.

Yes, undoubtedly we leaders had struggled at much personal cost, and we should never ourselves realize the full advantages which our successors inherit without such efforts. Then, too, there were those older colleagues who, having struggled equally with ourselves, were by age retirement out of the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Lord Fisher's letter, Appendix C.

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service before their courage and grit had won its reward in this success, in which, therefore, they had no share. What of these? Was not one well repaid in comparison by, at any rate, six years' active service in commissioned rank?

'The greatest good for the greatest number'; new generations would reap where we with toil had sown. Was there not reward and gratification in the knowledge of how far-reaching was the gain to the men and to the Navy, even though those who mostly benefited gave no thought to the sacrifices, and even danger of ruin, which their predecessors had encountered in hewing the path on which they may now so easily tread. Yes, after all it was indeed worth while!

A few weeks after my promotion there was to be a review on the parade ground in honour of King Edward's birthday, and a very tactful message came from the Commander-in-Chief: 'he hoped I and my colleague, Lieutenant H. W. Eason (of his signal staff) would find it convenient to attend.' This meant full dress and an opportunity for all officers to recognize us, so we both attended with our wives, and found everyone there very companionable and friendly to us.

One result of promotion, however, was the necessity of resigning the post of President of the R.N. Warrant Officers' Association, a position of

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honour to which I had been elected for a second term. In leaving, it was possible to place on record in the monthly journal a list of very considerable reforms initiated by that society during the term of my membership by which all classes composing it had benefited by increased allowances, and also by their vastly improved opportunities for advancement in the service. It was with very real regret I laid down the pressing duties of that position with which the progress of officers from the lower deck was so intimately bound up.

I was able to show, from the difference in my own situation compared with what it would have been had matters stood as they did when the incident in the Gunners' mess took place in 1881, how great the progress had been.

I had been promoted Chief nine years earlier than would have been possible under old regulations, with much improved pay as from 1896 on, and then had six potential years as Lieutenant ahead of me ; thus, independent of status, which was most important, there was an actual and potential financial gain of close on £2,000, with an improved pension when retirement arrived.

In April, 1905, the Admiralty appointed me as executive officer of H.M.S. *Clyde*, R.N.R. training ship moored in the harbour at Aberdeen.

The vessel had been converted from a corvette,



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with long flush decks for drill, the after part below being fitted as an official residence for the executive officer and his family ; while the small crew and instructors—those who cared to live on board—were berthed forward.

She was commanded by a Commander with a Fleet-Surgeon and Fleet-Paymaster, all three resident on shore. The drill armament was good and up-to-date with the new appliances associated with Sir Percy Scott for teaching aiming and rapid loading.

There were fluctuating members of Royal Naval Reserve officers and men attending for drill for terms from seven to thirty days. Sometimes we had a score of officers and 800 men, at others less than 50 all told, under instruction.

The position was unique for being of public service, and before long those slow-moving but sterling Aberdonians kept me busy in many ways : on the directorate of the Sailors' Home, inspection of Boys' Brigades, attendance—often with guards of honour—at public functions, etc.

It was interesting, too, to study the type of men who came under our hands. Many were from the Islands and Highlands, and these—as I had found in Inverness a quarter-century before—spoke little English, yet they were apt learners and particularly keen at field exercise ; while as to their loyalty, grit

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and courage, let the records of the Trawler Reserve in the Great War testify. We managed to get a couple of bagpipes and some drums, and twice weekly our battalion, headed by these, made long marches out into the country, practising movements and rifle drill *en route*. The men enjoyed this immensely, and so indeed did I.

We had three Commanders in succession, and all of these were most kind and considerate. The first completed his time and was retired under the age clause during my first year. His relief, after being absent through sickness for several months at irregular intervals, was invalided, after which for some months I was in command; and finally the third officer came, who remained till after my own supersession.

During the time I held command their Majesties King Edward and Queen Alexandra came to Aberdeen to open the new wing of Mareschal College. This was a great event both for the University and the city, and was suitably commemorated.

Among other public events was a public dinner given by the Lord Provost and Corporation in the Music Hall, there being such a scene of splendour as even the Corporation of London might envy. Among the guests were representatives of every University on earth (even Tibet, I believe, sending a delegate), and as all appeared in their academic

AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE robes the effect was magnificent. At the upper table were such men as the Prince of Monaco, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the present Archbishop of York (then Suffragan of Stepney, whose father was Principal of the University), Moderators of both the Scottish Presbyterian Churches, and so on.

The Lieutenant of the Coastguard and I represented the Navy, and there were very many Army officers present.

In the afternoon a guard of honour from the *Clyde* with R.N.R. officers, but temporarily commanded by the Coastguard Lieutenant, had been paraded to meet the King at the railway station, and I, with other unattached Army and Territorial officers, stood outside the entrance, forming lines through which their Majesties passed. As an indication of the uncanny faculty possessed by the Royal family for remembering faces, as King Edward was sitting down in the carriage, the Queen, already seated, touched him, and said, 'There is Mr. Capper.' It was seventeen years before that I had been in touch with them as Prince and Princess of Wales for a very brief period, yet Her Majesty remembered me perfectly, and both made a few gracious remarks.

At a later period Vice-Admiral Lord Charles Beresford (as he then was) brought a portion of the Channel Fleet to Aberdeen, and again the city gave itself up to festivity. Serving on the organizing

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committee, I learned that it was intended to give a banquet to the Admirals and officers, as well as a dinner to the ratings : my experience at Charlotte Town, P.E.I., recurred to me, and with a suspicion that the Chiefs and warrant officers would be excluded from the one, and by reason of their rank unable to join with the ratings, I communicated—before the arrival of the fleet—with one of their seniors, and found they had in fact been thus cut out at all the ports at which these gala calls had been made, the Admiral taking up exactly the same position as my Captain had done in the case mentioned.

So representations were made to the committee, and as a result a very excellent banquet for Chiefs and warrant officers, with specially selected guests, such as my friend Lieutenant and Quartermaster (now Lieut.-Colonel) W. Robertson, V.C., and a section of the Corporation, gave these social outsiders quite as happy a time as other officers had in another building.

We made a host of friends in Aberdeen of all classes and ranks, and found there that, as their national poet sang, ' a man's a man for a' that ', and from top to bottom never a sign of snobbery was ever seen. We also received and entertained on board, among others, General Reid—fresh from his Boxer triumphs—Admirals Lord Charles Beresford and

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R. Lowry, Dean Danson, and many other regular callers; one of the most welcome of our regular visitors was Captain Guy Mainwaring (my first Lieutenant in the *Dryad*), as debonair and gay as he was thirty-odd years before.

Here, too, we met the ubiquitous German espionage. We engaged a maid from Hamburg, with the idea of giving our children an opportunity to acquire the German language colloquially. After the young woman arrived (she was the daughter of a Lutheran pastor) I found her busy day after day in transcribing the various printed regulations posted on boards around the drill-deck, while one day her somewhat crude but quite recognizable drawing of the breech mechanism of a 5-inch gun fell into my hands. As the District Captain was to inspect the ship the following week, and I was in temporary command, I waited, and on his arrival related the circumstances to him. 'My dear Capper,' he said, 'the country is full of them, and the Germans know much better than ourselves where every waterworks, gasworks, and electric-light plant is situated. Just pack her off and say no more about it.'

Next day I detained (unopened) an official-looking letter she had handed the ship's postman for dispatch to Germany, and taxed her with having communicated details of our equipment to her own country. She at once confessed that was so, and seemed sur-

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prised when I denounced her for it. She said when she got her passport she was told to do so. So we put Margaret on shore and she promptly entered the service of a gentleman we knew whose wife was German born !

During each summer of our stay in Aberdeen the whole family moved out for some weeks to a farmhouse hired for the period, the farmer's family occupying the labourers' 'but and ben' while we were there : we thus got a view of the Scot at close quarters, and some of our experiences thus were very humorous.

One year we went to a farm beyond Banchory, which in the absence of my wife I had rented. What had attracted me—a mere man—was the spotless cleanliness of the house, just newly papered by the hands of the thrifty housewife. I acted only on appearances. The family went up on Friday and I followed on my bicycle to spend the week-end on Saturday afternoon, the distance being twenty-two miles. On arrival I went at once to the bedroom to change and wash my hands, and entering, threw my jacket over a chair. At once the chair-back fell off, so I sat upon another to enjoy a laugh, but this one in turn spread its legs and dropped me to the floor. Still more amused, I sat somewhat heavily upon the side of the bed, when, lo ! the bottom of the bedpost perforated the floor. Calling my wife to join in the

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merriment, I was told that practically everything in the house was similarly fractured, and the children had amused themselves, and at the same time prevented potential disaster, by labelling sundry articles, 'Beware, Dangerous'. They, later, attributed to me that, by maliciously winking at the grandfather clock, that useful article of household equipage had stopped.

The farmer and his family were sterling folk, but simple in both outlook and manners. The drinking-water was obtained by pumping from a well outside the house; but my wife was embarrassed when drawing a bucket of water to find the nose of a cow—attracted by the sound of the pumping—inserted in her bucket.

Joining the family one Sunday morning, I noticed a tear in the linoleum likely to trip one up, so sent a child to the farmer to ask the loan of a hammer to nail it down. She returned with the message that it was wrong to use tools on the Sabbath day; hence, having no scruples, it became necessary to employ a flat-iron in lieu of the embargoed hammer.

Other events which we were able to see the humorous side of occurred at other summer residences. At Newburgh by the Ythan we had a house, the property of a R.N.R. officer who happened to be under training on board. While there he

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invited us to visit a sweet and quite unspoiled fishing village a few miles away. As there were a number of healthy fowls about, it occurred to him to take one home to his wife, so he bargained for and purchased the one which pleased him most. Then he proceeded to catch it, but was a little inept. We all enjoyed his dashes hither and thither, the fowl easily escaping every time ; so someone ironically said, ' Better put some salt on its tail.' At once the fishwife rushed into her house and returned with a handful of salt, which, in all seriousness, she offered him with the remark, ' Aye ! Here's salt to catch the puir beastie ! '

Thrift and the Aberdonians is a standing joke for the English humorists ; we found them the most generous of friends, yet the following incident which I witnessed might be thought to bear out their alleged trait, though the humour in this case very nearly terminated in tragedy.

One cold winter's day a man fell overboard from the off side of a ship in the harbour. Very shortly half a dozen boats were being pulled to his assistance—amongst these two of the *Clyde's*. The first to reach the drowning man was a heavy dinghy, the sculler of which grasped the unfortunate fellow as he was sinking the third time and placed him in the bottom of the boat, where he lay quite unconscious. Then instead of sculling to the harbour



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steps close by, where was gathered a number of folk waiting to render assistance, he sculled out into the middle of the harbour, disregarding the shouts of the people to come alongside the steps ; he sculled on until we saw him lean over and pick up his cap, which he had lost in his hurried passage to the drowning man. Then he pulled to the steps and handed out the unconscious burden, when willing hands at once commenced artificial respiration ; but it was a long time before the man was brought back to life.

I asked the boatman afterwards why he had not first put the man on shore. He replied, ' I cud na resk ma bonnet, ye ken.'

## CHAPTER XIII

### PIPING DOWN

*' Rest is not quitting the busy career,  
Rest is the fitting oneself to one's sphere.'*

J. S. DWIGHT.

LEAVING to take up my old post at Sheerness in May, 1908, I was honoured by a public subscription being raised, and by being presented with a very heavy and valuable piece of plate, thus departing with the pleasantest memories of the Granite City.

Two further uneventful years followed at Sheerness, where the Dockyard Reserve was but a shadow of its former state, and in which the only incidents to remember were my periodical visits on behalf of the Captain Superintendent to shipbuilding works in Glasgow and elsewhere to inspect ships under repair, or to take them over on completion.

In April, 1910, came my fifty-fifth birthday, and, with no joy in my heart, severance from the ties of a lifetime on retirement from the ' finest service in the world '.

We then purchased a suitable villa, with an extensive garden, at Hadleigh, in Essex, close to the ruined castle which had been given to Hubert de Burgh in recognition of his gallant fleet action off Dover in 1217.

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Here, with an exiguous pension, and a large number of children—two being then at public schools and five others, young ones, growing up—there was necessity to add to one's income. Regularly from 1882 onwards my pen had earned a little from Press work, and particularly on two service journals under pseudonyms, as well as by collaboration with Mr. Holman in his *People* column, *The Man Behind the Gun*, and editing *The Bluejacket and Soldier*, and these had brought regular, if small, additions to income. This work was expanded, and other literary engagements undertaken, which made it possible to carry on: I also compiled the *Naval Warrant Officers' Manual*, 1910.

About this time Miss Agnes Weston was subjected to much hostile criticism, and my connexion with one weekly paper permitted me to join with my old literary friend, Mr. Fred T. Jane, in writing a series of articles in her defence. The most ungenerous feature of these attacks was the fact that they were made by an ex-service man: particularly in view of how much this really great lady had done, and was still doing, for the men of the fleet.

Some months later, when these attacks had died down, Miss Weston invited me to act as her representative for whole-time work at the East Coast naval towns, and to co-operate with her agent already

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on the ground : the sole proviso that my newspaper engagements must temporarily cease being part of the arrangement.

So for two years, and until the outbreak of war, my business was to attend at Chatham, Greenwich, Sheerness, Gravesend, and elsewhere, for work among boys and men.

That part of my duties which was most congenial was visiting that nursery of the Navy, Greenwich Hospital School, there to influence some of the 900 little lads, of from 11 to 14 years of age, who were being prepared for entry into the Service, to do so as already members of the R.N. Temperance Society and the R.N. Christian Union.

Greenwich Hospital was founded in 1695 by William and Mary as 'an asylum for decayed and disabled seamen, and for the education and maintenance of their children'. The School was commenced in a small way in 1715, gradually increasing in size and importance. There was until 1870 an upper school of the most promising boys called 'The Upper Nautical', from which graduated numbers of lads who entered the Navy as navigating, accountant, and engineer officers, a few being appointed as naval instructors. Then a Superintendent, who had himself graduated through this Upper School, was appointed, and his first act was to cause the abolition of the system whereby he and

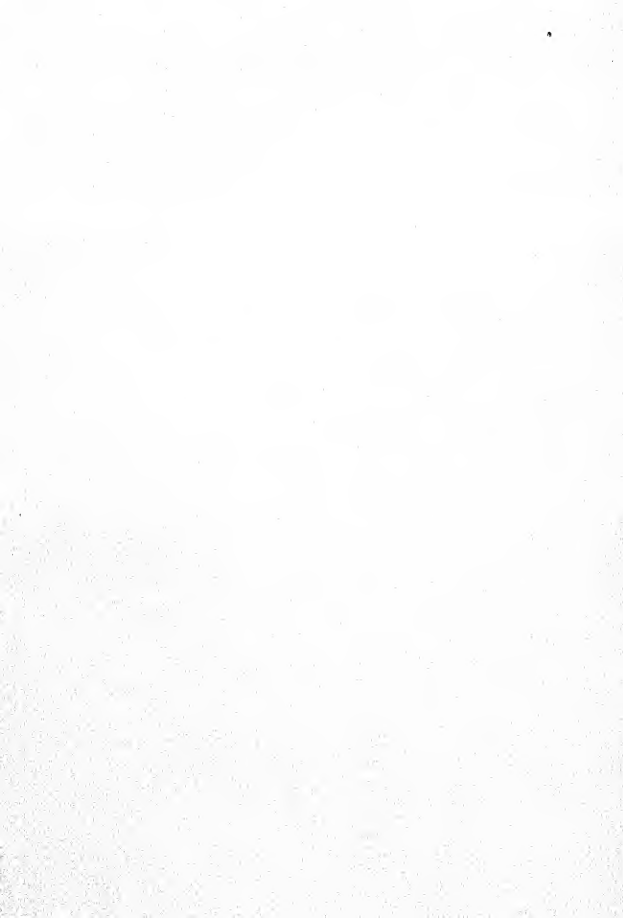
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others, many of them sons of lower-deck men, had found their way to the quarter-deck.

At the time I took up the duties of visitor the cream of the boys who had reached the highest educational standard were passed into the Service in what was considered as the most respectable classes, viz. ships' steward and writer boys, as these did not wear the ordinary seamen's dress. But for them there was no promotion above the rating of chief petty officer, and the lads had the bitter experience of seeing boys they had excelled easily in the educational tests passing up as warrant officers to the quarter-deck, to which *they* were denied access. The adoption by the Admiralty of the suggestions in 'The Tree of Promotion' has happily since that date adjusted the unfair anomaly.

With the concurrence of the Superintendent, Captain Cooper-Key, and the executive officer, Lieutenant J. Reid, small societies were formed under my supervision which were worked by the boys themselves, which with lantern lectures and other attractions brought large numbers of the little chaps into the circle. It has been a stimulating study in recent years to mark the published promotion lists of naval officers, and to note the high percentage of the lads I was then associated with who have made good in the Navy.



A PETTY OFFICER, FIRST CLASS, OF TO-DAY



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Another section of Miss Weston's work was to interview every man who joined for short service (to serve on in the Royal Fleet Reserve). These lads of about eighteen years of age were trained at Chatham Barracks, where also was a training school for domestic (or steward) boys. My colleague and I arranged a weekly tea and entertainment in a converted brewery formed as a Sailors' Rest—the Navy House—and all these lads were gathered there at least once during the time of their training. Here, after a pleasant evening with addresses from experienced officers and others, we gave every one of these budding British men-of-war's-men an opportunity to commence their career on right lines.

Subsequently, during the war I came across numbers of these men who readily renewed acquaintance, and from the greater number learned that they had stuck to their promises. Of such material is the present Navy composed.

Then at the R.N. Barracks and R.M. Theatre my colleague and I arranged for big meetings, with the Commander-in-Chief, Commodore, or Brigadier-General, R.M., in the chair, and, with concert programme, sketches, and society performers, there was a speaker of outstanding ability and reputation, such as the late Canon R. F. Horsley, Dr. Arthur Evans, Surgeon-General Watt, and many others. At these events the huge gymnasium was packed to the



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE doors, and with such countenance for our plans many accessions to membership resulted.

But the material on which we had to work was widely different from that of my early days in the West Indies, as the accompanying illustrations may indicate. Drunkenness was then neither looked down upon nor disgraceful. In 1911 to 1914, however, quite another view was taken, the aim of the majority of the men being to lead decent lives. Better educated, of a higher social type, our methods had to be adapted to the new atmosphere.

There were occasional trips to Gravesend and other ports to entertain the crews of foreign war-ships, and Scandinavians, Americans, and Japanese, all in turn, were met and entertained at the direction of this large-hearted lady.

In 1913, Mr. Winston Churchill, being First Lord, Vice-Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, First Sea Lord, and Vice-Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, Second Sea Lord (for personnel), the system of promoting young warrant and petty officers—on examination—to the commissioned grade of Mate was introduced : these officers to reach the rank of Lieutenant in two years, and thereafter to be eligible for promotion up to the rank of Commander on the active list. (This scheme, since extended to engine-room ratings, and varied to include junior men of

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leading rating and A.B.'s, has now been in successful operation for fifteen years.<sup>1</sup>)

Just at this time I was engaged in an effort to reach the 'fount of honour' with a request that some signal mark of royal favour should be bestowed upon Miss Agnes Weston in recognition of the wonderful labours of her life among seamen, and the immense results for good which had followed from her efforts.

I was supported by many Admirals, among whom were Lord Beresford, Admirals R. Lowry, J. Startin, Sir George King-Hall, and many others, and Prince Louis was one of these. At an interview I had with him on this subject at Whitehall he discussed with me the future of the new class of 'ranker' officers, the Mates, and in a very candid talk I gave him some idea of the handicaps which had met me in my own upward career.

In addition to being the soul of honour and devoted to this country of his adoption, and to the Navy in which he had passed practically the whole of his life, the Prince was a thoughtful and shrewd observer. He asked me this question :

<sup>1</sup> That the Admiralty is in earnest in endeavouring to find suitable officers from the lower deck appears to be proved by the promotion in the New Year Honours List, 1927, of one of the first batch of these Mates to Commander, in the person of Commander James Figgins, who is therefore the first ranker officer to reach that rank by passing examinations.

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‘What games do you play?’ I replied that as a matter of fact I played none at all. ‘Don’t you play cards, billiards, tennis, hockey, cricket, golf, or football?’ he asked. ‘No,’ I replied, ‘all my recreative time is spent in reading and writing.’ ‘Well, Capper,’ he said, ‘that is very probably the main cause of the aloofness of the officers which you tell me of; now, if you want these young men to find their proper level in the ward-room, use the facilities you have to advise them to cultivate playing the same games as their messmates play, and thus create a companionship with those who belong to the new sphere they are entering.’

It struck me as typical of this splendid officer, holding the highest post open to a naval man, thus troubling to straighten out the difficult path of these young men in new and difficult circumstances. The kindly advice he gave was duly published in the *Naval Warrant Officers’ Journal*, and in some cases which came to my notice it certainly was adopted by those concerned.

Then in August, 1914, came war. Not being on the ‘called up’ list, I waited till September to wind up the Sailors’ Rest work, and then sent a request for employment to the Secretary of the Admiralty.

Directed to report at Chatham, I was asked whether I would go to Dover, and there (bringing into play what platform talents I was alleged to

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possess) organize a Corps for Anti-Aircraft service, an entirely new departure. It was stated that, so far, there were no guns available, but a few search-lights with which to dazzle and deflect the course of any possible raiders. Also the Corps thus raised was, whilst naval as to pay and discipline, to be under the command of the General of the garrison.

Such an independent appointment appealed to me, and having obtained the services of a Boatswain and some fifty petty officers and men, ex the sunken cruisers *Aboukir* and her consorts, we started for Dover. Within a week we had one light installed, using (temporarily) the motive power of a Tilling-Stevens electric lorry, and the display of its beam, I was assured by many friends, gave fresh courage to numbers of the townsfolk.

Before my arrival, the Mayor had called meetings, and a list of some 500 names was at our disposal from which to select members for the potential force, so, on October 1st, Captain Logan Stansfeld, R.N., came down from London and instituted the Corps. There was, on the civilian side, a Lieut.-Commander, R.N.V.R., in nominal command, who in private life was the most prominent doctor in the town; with six Sub-Lieutenants in charge of crews. These consisted of a retired Army Colonel and a Major, a solicitor (Clerk of the Peace), two bank managers, and a wholesale merchant.

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The petty officers and men were of all classes, comprising such diverse professions as clergymen, solicitors, surveyors, and bank managers, science teachers, independent gentlemen, prominent tradesmen, and so on down to fishermen.

At our final general meeting before the enrolment, I suggested that if we were to have a successful career in defence of the town we should copy the healthy atmosphere of the most sternly disciplined service on earth, under which indeed we were to serve, the Navy ; for thus we should practically show our loyalty and efficiency in our work. The motto of the Corps should then be :

‘ A STRICT SHIP IS A HAPPY ONE.’

This was unanimously adopted, and throughout the two years of the Dover Anti-Aircraft Corps’ useful life that was our practical and expressive guide.

The Mayor, Mr. (now Sir) Edward Farley, co-operated with us, and the Town Council made the loan of the historic Maison Dieu Hall for our parades (a residue of the ancient Priory suppressed by Henry VIII, and afterwards appropriated by Queen Elizabeth as a granary for the Navy). They also set apart two rooms as offices in the adjoining Maison Dieu House, with a couple of garrets as dormitories for myself and my chauffeur.

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In my room were set out the large-scale charts of the North Sea, and being connected night and day with Whitehall we had immediate notice of the departure of all enemy aircraft from their shores, and continued reports of their course so that we could plot their route on the charts and were able to decide in good time whether or no the enemy was bound for our neighbourhood. All light stations were also connected to my room, and until the enemy was close at hand the whole organization could be controlled from it. When danger was imminent my colleague and I at once went, by car, either to the Castle top or to any other station which was likely to be attacked, where the same telephonic arrangements were set up.

The Corps was divided into three companies, each of two crews, the crews being on duty from sunset to dawn on alternate nights; the seamen having charge of the stations by day and augmenting the civilian crews at night. The civilian volunteers had had no idea of payment for their services, but much to their surprise the Admiralty insisted on giving both officers and men the proper service emoluments of their rank or rating, and also provided uniform.

My position was really that of Commander of the force—though nominally my colleague was in that position for the civilian side, until he resigned

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after some months' service. The duties of executive officer, Instructor, Paymaster and Store Officer also fell to me, and one eschewed delights and lived laborious days for the first few months: well over twenty hours per day of work and supervision.

Lieut.-Commander Ian Howden, R.N.V.R., who was head of the civilian side of the Corps for the earlier portion of its existence, was, in addition to being a doctor of outstanding eminence, also a student of science and a most accomplished gentleman. To him was due much of the success we achieved, for no detail was too small, no undertaking too laborious, or effort too great to ensure success, but his enthusiasm would carry it through. From the moment of taking up his commission he entered heartily into every scheme to safeguard this historic town with its wealth of relics of the past, and to ensure with the means at our command and by co-operation with the naval and military authorities that, as Dover was undoubtedly the main objective of the enemy, the maximum of vigilance and care should be exerted to protect its inhabitants.

With a long service experience in both belligerent and civil work, I have never at any time been associated with a more conscientious and loyal brother officer than this fine character, who threw his all into the duties for his town and for his country. After he left us he took charge, under the

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military, of a travelling radio unit in France, and did as excellent service for the Army as he had done for Anti-Aircraft work.

For the first few months in Dover I was accommodated in the depot for submarines, H.M.S. *Arrogant*, and learned a great deal while living with the gallant young officers who so courageously and loyally manipulate this scientific weapon of the sea.

They are all youthful, and have all the enthusiasm for their employment which one associates with men entering into their life's work. The dangerous nature of their employment appeared to worry them not at all, and I was continually interested at mess by the gaiety of these most efficient fighters; while the general anxiety and concern when some of their number were late in returning from a trip was eloquent testimony of their close association and regard for each other.

There were but three of us in the mess of mature age: a medical officer recalled from retirement, the torpedo store Lieutenant, and myself, and it amused me one night at dinner to discover that only the doctor and I, among some sixty of these officers, had been east of Suez.

The Corps was fortunate in obtaining use of the arms belonging to Dover College, O.T.C. (one of the Masters, in Holy Orders, being our Chaplain),



AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE and we were permitted to drill in the College grounds and gymnasium. The men were instructed in rifle and field exercise, cutlass and pistol, knots and splices, visual signalling, and swimming ; there were also regular courses of rifle and revolver firing. Lectures were given on internal combustion engines, magnetism and electricity (so that all might be acquainted with the appliances they used), while the First Aid course of St. John Ambulance Corps was taken up by a considerable number of men.

Our R.N. seamen were not overlooked, and what I had learned of the continual progress in social and material matters was confirmed by what one saw at close quarters with these fine fellows. Some among our staff were R.F. Reserve men, whose normal engagement was to come up for drill for a fortnight annually ; in the intervals they were their own masters. Several who came under my notice had built up prosperous little businesses : these had to be abandoned at a few hours' notice when the order ' Mobilize ' was telegraphed to them.

One excellent petty officer had a business as a house decorator, employing nine workmen, three of whom were also R.N.R. men. This business he had to leave at once on the order ' Mobilize ', and, as it was work his wife was incapable of supervising, his prompt reply to his country's call meant absolute ruin.

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There were other cases almost equally as painful, yet I never heard a single complaint at their hard luck, for their patriotism and sense of duty carried all before it.

The heavy duties at Dover were much lightened by the opportunity of showing friends the war sights of the ancient citadel: among many others who from time to time were my guests were the late Fred T. Jane, the well-known naval journalist, Sir Evan Spicer and family; while Lord Fisher honoured me by inspecting, and approving, the arrangements on our various stations.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WAR!

*'Whatever sacrifice the hour demand  
Let it be ours to make, that foe and friend  
May know that still, as in the past, our land  
Remains our own, we Britons, to the end.'*

C. E. B.

OUR Light Stations (which continually increased in numbers as stores and equipment became available) were each supplied with a 24-inch naval searchlight, and an oxo-acetylene outfit for a secondary light.

The first had as motive power a petrol engine and dynamo, and as the light of the oxo-acetylene outfit was inferior in power and in range it occurred to me that the latent power of the engine might be utilized to work the second light if the spare lamp of the electric projector could be fitted to it.

This idea was carried out very cleverly by the Corps Electrician, and we thus doubled the power of our organization at each station without extra cost to the State.

There were numbers of inspections by Generals and by Admirals, as well as by several Government officials, which augmented the keenness of the rank and file, already phenomenal. One of our aims was to evolve an instrument for extending to the ear similar aid to that the telescope provides for the

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eye. We experimented with horns, tubes, and megaphones with stethoscope attachment, and were so successful with the latter that our model went to the Royal Physical Laboratory at Teddington. There the experts evolved from our crude instrument one which was useful for detecting the sound of aircraft at considerable distances, and from this our French Allies produced an improved apparatus which was used throughout the battle area.

We also experimented with a most ingenious invention of an American gentleman, Mr. De La Torre, who had contrived an instrument he called a 'Locophone'<sup>1</sup> which would locate unerringly the direction of sound in a fog. It was hoped that this too would aid us in rapidly fixing the direction of an aircraft moving towards us and enable it to be illuminated without delay.

We found the Locophone most useful, and passing it on to the Committee of Inventions, sitting under the presidency of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, we later had the satisfaction of knowing that, somewhat altered by the experts of that body, it forms the nucleus of the instrument which is now in common use to detect sounds in submarines.

About midday on December 24th, 1914, one of

<sup>1</sup> Under the authority of Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, I embarked in the *Lord Clive* (Captain (now Rear-Admiral), B. St. G. Collard), and the machine was successfully tested in a fog.

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the civilian chief petty officers, a local solicitor (Mr. E. E. Chitty), came into the office with some fragments, still hot, of the first hostile bomb ever dropped in this country: it burst in a garden near by. We had a portion attractively mounted in a sealed glazed ebonite stand as a paper weight, and I was permitted to offer it to His Majesty, who graciously received it at Buckingham Palace. It is understood to be still a valued souvenir there.

On the night of 17-18th May, 1915, a hostile airship made for Dover, and from the Castle turret our staff watched for its coming. All the crews (there were but three then, though the number was largely augmented later) were keenly waiting to locate it by ear, and there was immense competition to be first to illuminate it. The fortunate crew was that at Langdon Heights, having passed which, after dropping bombs at Oxney, it was illuminated by the Langdon light under Sub-Lieutenant J. P. R. Clarke (Major, ret.), and was the first enemy aircraft thus seen over our shores. The dazzle of the lights, as soon as all three were upon it, deflected it to the harbour, where it harmlessly discharged its bombs.

As we had promised, the successful crew was presented by my colleague and me with replicas in silver of the Corps badge, with suitable inscription on the reverse to commemorate this event.

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Several other attacks were made by airship, notably one by five vessels on 9-10th August, 1915, and one of these was winged by an anti-aircraft gun from Langdon, fired by Lieutenant Burkett : it came down helplessly in the sea at Ostend, British aeroplanes giving it the *coup de grâce*.

The first attack by aeroplane—not including the dropping of the first bomb on December 24th, 1914—was on January 22nd, 1916, when a series of bombs were dropped along some of the most congested streets, killing one civilian and four soldiers and injuring one woman, three children, and eleven soldiers. Some of the houses struck by these bombs were terribly damaged and converted into shambles.

Thereafter there were constant raids by night, and later on by day. On two occasions close to our head-quarters, the fragments pitting the windows of my dormitory, and on one day, when there was a confirmation service proceeding in the College chapel, a bomb was dropped on the green outside, scaring the parents of the boys so seriously that a considerable number of the scholars were at once withdrawn. Eventually the College was removed to Cambridge until the termination of the war, so as to be outside the danger zone.

Throughout the war 185 bombs and 23 shells fell upon this ancient town ; 23 persons were killed,

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and 71 injured, the small number of casualties bearing eloquent testimony to the excellent arrangements which were made for shelter in the caves and other refuges which were utilized for this purpose.

It was apparent that aim was taken at the splendid Town Hall and its venerable vestibule, Maison Dieu Hall, near to which was the extensive range of buildings of the ancient Priory—now the Dover College. Fortunately, none of these were struck throughout the war.

In the summer of 1915 the Admiralty decided that the strength of the Corps should be decreased by one-third, but the *esprit de corps* was so strong that it was unanimously decided to retain the whole strength as before, the discharged one-third serving on, and the two-thirds pooling their emoluments, which were distributed *pro rata* to all members. From the first this little unit of extremely loyal men was placed under the Naval Discipline Act, portions of which were read at each monthly parade, when many distinguished personages attended from time to time to see the proceedings. Of the number on the roll we sent many volunteers to join the Army and Navy.

But although these splendid fellows, who followed their vocations by day and devoted their evenings and every other night to the protection of their townsmen, were kept in the strictest discipline, recreation

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was not overlooked. Sports were arranged for, and the whole Corps and their wives and friends had occasional right royal outings in the Cricket Ground. Also for a fortnight they went under canvas in the most up-to-date fashion. Marquees and tents were provided by Chief Petty Officer (afterwards Sub-Lieutenant) E. Birch, and erected on Langdon Heights. Water was laid on to the camp, and all tents electrically illuminated from the generating plant of the searchlight. A signal mast and ship's bell was erected and the routine of one of H.M. ships carried out.

The commanding officer of all Anti-Aircraft Corps in England, Captain Logan Stansfeld, R.N., came down on inspection duty, and was greatly impressed by the *esprit de corps* and efficiency shown.

Only one untoward event took place during this period. The usual morning ceremony of hoisting the colours was in progress; bugles ready for the call as the sound of the bell ceased, and all hands standing at attention, when I, in the garb of nature, standing in my tub, glanced between the roof and wall of my marquee and saw to my horror that the white ensign was being hoisted upside down. Endowed by nature with a strong voice, the arresting order and some acidulated remarks caused the matter to be quickly adjusted, though the fleeting vision



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of a towel-clad figure—*à la* Sheik—was long remembered by the whole organization.

Drop Redoubt station was entered from a bridge on which one walked single file: its inner end resting on a stone platform where the sentry stood. One night the General came to inspect, and leading the staff and myself, passed over the bridge. There he found the sentry with his rifle at 'the carry', trembling with nervousness. 'Well?' said the officer—who was the kindest of men. 'P-please, sir,' said the man, who was a raw recruit, 'I don't know whether you ought to have a shoulder or a "chuck up".' 'Chuck up, my man,' said the imperturbable General, and passed in with a smile. 'War time, you know, Capper!' he commented. 'Anything can happen in war!'

It was not long before the tragic letters commencing 'I regret to have to inform you that your husband — was unfortunately killed,' etc., etc., began to reach Dover residents, and the echo of many such a loss was communicated to us, who shared in the sorrow. Even in these cases, however, there was sometimes humour.

For example, one day I overheard a conversation outside the post office, something as follows:

A woman in deep mourning, with one child in her arms and two at her skirts similarly clad, was saying to a sympathetic listener:

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'Yus, they writes and ses as they regrets my Bill 'as been killed ; so I draws 'is insurance money and gets meself and the kiddies into black, and they looks beautiful. Then along comes another letter to sy as 'e ain't dead arter all. Ain't it a d——d shime ? '

While thus stationed at Dover, numbers of military officers were attached, and other notable folk came to learn what they could of our methods, so that a considerable number of acquaintances resulted. Among these was Mr. (now Sir) Evan Spicer and his family, with whom on subsequent occasions I was privileged with my invalid wife to pass some time at 'Belair', his beautiful rural home in urban Dulwich.

The local Sailors' Rest belonged to the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, more lately called the British Sailors' Society, and I was elected on the governing committee. From this connexion resulted an invitation to join that Society's work as a sort of *liaison* officer between it and the Admiralty.

Accordingly, in the closing months of 1916, when the Army had taken over all anti-aircraft work in Britain, the Dover Corps was replaced by R.E. Territorials and disbanded, and I joined this splendid old Society.

Before my leaving Dover, Lord French went around the parabola of stations, and was good enough

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to congratulate me upon the organization, while the local Brigadier-General, the General Officer Commanding Eastern Command, and Lord French sent to the Admiralty a recommendation for my promotion to the substantive rank of Commander. Captain Logan Stansfeld, my immediate naval superior, also sent in a gratifying recommendation. The time had, however, not arrived for the advancement of officers of my class to that rank (nor has it yet), and so only a letter expressive of 'their lordships' approval' resulted from this very strong request, though during the following years the award of O.B.E. was conferred in recognition of the work at Dover.

## CHAPTER XV

### 'COMMON SAILORS'

*'I recollect how Sailors' Rights was won,  
Yard locked to yard, hot gun-lip kissin' gun.'*

LOWELL.

THE Admiralty approved of my appointment to the British Sailors' Society, where my programme was to endeavour to raise the character of some of the 100 odd Homes and Rests of that—the oldest Sailors' Society—to something like the level of those of Miss Agnes Weston, for the Royal Navy.

It was noted that many thousands of mercantile seamen and R.N.R. men were then in the Royal Navy, and it was recognized that after these had been experiencing the amenities of the Royal Sailors' Rests they would be dissatisfied with the far inferior accommodation with which some of the Mercantile Homes were equipped.

It was a most congenial task to undertake work among the seamen of the great sister service, many of whom were of the identical type of the non-continuous service men of my early years in the Navy, and with numbers of whom I had been associated when training the R.N.R. Like the R.N. men, I found, they had vastly improved, mentally and socially.

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Almost as soon as I got into the saddle the area of my work expanded enormously. It was proposed to organize the Society's work in all the London Docks. To the Society was also given the care of some 2,000 Mercantile Marine officers and men who were interned as prisoners of war in Germany and Austria. On top of this came the great disasters of the war, and as the losses of warships and their crews included numbers of the R.N. Reserve men, the widows and orphans came on our hands. (It is to be borne in mind that this was prior to the nation undertaking pensioning of dependents of all who fell in its service, so we had to register, from the Admiralty books, those who were widowed from the losses at the Battle of the Bight and Jutland.)

Then the intensive submarine campaign commenced, and day by day reports came in of survivors reaching the outports, and being cared for by our missionaries and staff. The volume of the work becoming so great, very soon other officials were brought in who, with great ability, developed and took over much of this work of additional character, viz. the Rev. G. F. Dempster, who took the London Docks and oversight of all missionaries, and Mr. A. B. Collins, who undertook the superintendence of Relief.

Money was needed, so first Admiral Sir George King-Hall made a public appeal for funds, which had

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an excellent response, but the result was speedily disbursed as more and more claims fell upon the Society. Then, Lord Jellicoe having come to Whitehall as First Sea Lord, Lady Jellicoe signed an appeal which was endorsed strongly by the First Lord, Mr. Arthur Balfour, in a splendid letter attached to it. Dame Margaret Lloyd George also issued an appeal. To these there was a very magnificent answer in a continuous stream of cheques and money orders ; and opening the post, one was humbled to find that side by side with a £100 cheque would be an equally splendid one-shilling postal order from an old-age pensioner. Nothing made the staff more strictly economical than such pathetic contributions.

The atmosphere of the office was most brotherly, and this was reflected in the sympathetic labours of the missionaries at the various Rests at the ports. Some of these would from time to time have as many as fifty survivors, with nothing but what they stood up in, to relieve, equip, and dispatch to their homes.

Later, Lady Beatty also made an appeal, and this was even more strongly supported by the public, who at this time had a true appreciation of the value of the sailor to the nation, two-thirds of whose daily food comes from overseas by their toil, and in war at the imminent risk of their lives.

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The number of orphans created by sinking of British ships caused the Society to set aside a definite sum for the education of a limited number of these at the Little Boys' Homes at Farningham. There are thirty there at present.

Here, eventually, a separate house was set apart, and the little lads were entered with the object of educating them for apprenticeship as officers in the Mercantile Marine, and keeping in touch with them by means of the International Sailors' Brotherhood (which, started by my colleague Rev. G. F. Dempster, has now its associates all around the coasts of the world, and which can thus keep in touch with lads and help them in foreign ports to avoid evil surroundings).

The British Sailors' Society maintains its interest in these lads until in due time they pass through its Nautical School at head-quarters and possess Mates' certificates of proficiency. In this system Countess Beatty takes a keen personal interest.

Another phase of its work is selecting lads from its Sea Cadet companies at the outports, and training them in the Prince of Wales' Hostel at Limehouse for entry in the Mercantile Marine, and their ever-increasing claims are now dealt with by the Welfare Department of the Society.

All this special work is in addition to the normal business of providing Homes and good influences

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in numerous ports in this country and abroad ; while the Samaritan work, supply of garments, loan of libraries for ships and lighthouses, and care of the families of absent seamen, form such a programme as should attract to its support the most generous and sustained financial assistance from all who appreciate the sailor.

During the war years a succession of men saved from submarined and otherwise destroyed ships was constantly passing through our hands. Rough fellows they were, many of them, but their devotion to duty and their loyalty to the flag was undoubted : they were *men* ! Some had been in disaster after disaster—one man on six occasions had been in vessels sunk by the enemy. When I asked him what he was going to do when we had once more outfitted him, he looked up with surprise in his eyes, ‘ Why, get another ship,’ he said. With such men manning our ships there was no hope of German frightfulness destroying the morale of the nation, and at that time there was no doubt of the gratitude of the nation to its sailors : a feeling which, alas, has since grown very dim.

How simple, yet how graphic, the stories these survivors from deadly peril had to tell ! ‘ Long hours of ceaseless watching, and the cliffs of England in view. Hope for home and safety in a few hours, and at any rate the surety of aid in case the



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enemy in his underwater attack got them before  
detection.

‘ Then suddenly, unseen, the shock and the explosion : hurried orders from the bridge where the Captain had long been rehearsing what to do in such an emergency. The sinking ship, with the ruthless enemy still discharging shell on her helpless hull. The boats are lowered : in far too many cases they are stove by the shell, or jammed by the sheer of the ship as she lists to one side and brings her decks almost vertical. Then the order, “ Everyone to the boats ! ” and still the pitiless hail of shrapnel, wounding and disabling the crew. At last, as the vessel heaves and sinks, the few survivors are called to the side of the submarine, the Captain and Chief Engineer taken on board, and the rest abandoned to make the best of their way to port in broken boats, often without food or water and many miles from land.’

Such stories made one’s blood boil with indignation at the deliberate evasion by the enemy of every rule of the brotherhood of the sea : not to mention the violation of International Maritime Law. Better than reproducing the stories of any of these fine men who, after such perils and experiences, went readily again to another ship to ‘ do their bit ’ in the service of their country, let me interpolate the official reports of two or three of these perilous voyages.

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'Bad weather in the North Atlantic, when to a Patrol ship came, by wireless, an S.O.S. call.

'The answer was sent at once, and the ship turned to the latitude and longitude indicated where a British steamship was "rapidly sinking". No further message came, and on reaching the spot no wreckage was seen even after searching for some miles in many directions, so the conclusion was reached that another "*spurlos versinkt*" case had occurred, and the ship sunk without trace in fearful weather.

'But this conclusion was sadly incorrect: the s.s. *Artist*, at 9 a.m. that day, voyaging from a United States port, had been struck by a torpedo from an invisible German submarine, which pierced the side close to the water-line. The sea ran high and swept over her bows as she settled by the head. Waist deep in water, the crew struggled desperately to lower the boats. In the first two were all the officers and part of the crew, in the third an apprentice and a few others. From this boy's story (he was but sixteen) it appears that the Chief Officer's boat was dashed against the ship's side and destroyed. His own boat had the after fall unhooked, and for a moment hung vertically, spilling out two men who were never again seen; but at the next wave was raised, the foremost fall unhooked, and she righted and cleared the ship, the remaining men pulling at

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the oars. The Captain's boat also pulled clear and both put out sea-anchors and drifted all that day. The full crew of the s.s. *Artist* was forty-five ; the apprentice did not know how many had been drowned in the Chief Officer's boat, nor how many survived in that of the Captain, but in his own were sixteen, including himself.

' All that night the gale blew with even greater violence, and the thermometer stood at 37 degrees. All the time the men, half-frozen and saturated, must continue baling the boat and keeping her head to sea. By morning seven men had died from exposure, while nothing further was seen of the Captain's boat. All next day and the following night they drifted, the men dying one after another, and their bodies being consigned to the deep ; while the weakened survivors were dying too, from the feet upward, from frostbite : one poor fellow suffering also from the agony of a broken arm. On the night of the third day they saw the distant lights of land to the north.

' At 9 a.m. on the next day, the sea having gone down, the survivors were enabled to make sail, and, seventy-two hours from the torpedoing, they were rescued by an outward-bound vessel, only nine in all, and later transferred to a patrol vessel, which conveyed them to port, where, in a Sailors' Home they received first aid.'

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Five of these were sent by our missionaries to hospital, the remaining four, including the apprentice, were cared for and nursed for a few days and then rapidly recovered.

No story of heroism in the war so much moved me as that of Skipper Thomas Crisp, R.N.R., of the *Nelson* armed motor-trawler. He was not one of my Aberdeen friends, but came from an English port, Grimsby, I think.

'His trawl was down and he below one day when, without warning, a shell dropped but a yard or so from the bows. At once all hands went to stations, the trawl was buoyed and slipped, and the Skipper took the helm. The enemy submarine continued to fire, and to approach the trawler. As soon as she was nearly in range the trawler's gun replied, but the shot fell very short.

'At last a shell struck the Skipper, tore a piece from his side, and he fell, his son taking the wheel. To the Gunner who came to render aid he said, "It's all right, boy! Do your best with the gun," and to the Second Hand he dictated the message:

"*Nelson* attacked by submarine. Skipper killed. Send assistance at once."

This message was dispatched by pigeon and the bird reached its homing post with the script.

'As the trawler settled down and the ammunition

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was nearly exhausted, the Second Hand again went for orders; these were, "Abandon ship, throw the books overboard." Then they asked should they lift him into the boat, but he replied, "Tom, I'm done. Throw me overboard."

'But so terribly wounded was he that they feared to move him, so pulled away and left him on the deck which was now nearly awash, and then laid on their oars a little way off awaiting the end. In a few minutes, with her flag still proudly flying and her still breathing Skipper on his quarter-deck, the *Nelson* went down in the still evening hour, the enemy having steamed away.

'The remainder of the crew headed for home, but toward morning the wind freshened and blew them off their course, so hoisting some rags on an oar, and a pair of trousers on a boathook, they made fast to a buoy until the afternoon, when rescue came.

'Skipper Thomas Crisp was decorated posthumously by His Majesty with the Victoria Cross.'

These few instances should be sufficient to prove how the rough and often unruly merchant seaman and fisherman is, before all, a *man*. That the breed is the same as in the days of Drake—those spacious days of Queen Elizabeth—when the real manhood of the nation went forth to create its glory. With coolness and courage, and with foreknowledge that

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they carried their lives in their hands, many of these humble men went time and again to venture all they had in the country's service. It is true there was then recognition and gratitude for the sacrifice, but how little does the nation remember these magnificent services to-day? That there was ready appreciation of what sailors were doing for Britain during the war was shown in many ways, not least of which was the generous response to the Sailors' Society's appeals for financial support; but in smaller and trivial things this was very obvious.

I remember on one occasion travelling in uniform to speak at a London meeting in the interests of our work, when, proceeding along the Strand in an omnibus, the conductor came for his fare, and I discovered my purse had been left with the garments I had just changed from. Explaining my dilemma to him, at once half a dozen offers came from other passengers to pay my fare, while a lady sitting next me pressed me to take ten shillings so that I might not be embarrassed for funds until reaching my home.

Should such a contretemps occur to a naval officer in these times I think it improbable that even the small charge for an omnibus fare would be proffered to help him out of a difficulty, far less the loan of ten shillings to a total stranger.

There were many aeroplane raids during my

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London service. The first which happened recurs often to my memory.

The Secretary and his staff were holding a business conference in the Board Room of the Society's building at the junction of Commercial Road, E., and East and West India Dock Roads, when the alarm was given by maroon; it was, I think, in the afternoon.

As I had just left the danger area at Dover the conference looked to me for a lead, and accustomed to these alarms I suggested we should continue with our work, one official leaving to direct the typists and other women workers to seek shelter in the solid basement.

Very shortly afterwards we heard the bombs dropping close to us, and then the raider passed over our building and dropped a bomb (probably aimed at our own large structure) on a chemist's shop across the road.

Then, later, we saw from our windows a melancholy procession of men and weeping women conveying the little broken bodies of children to the nearest hospital: that fine representative of the poor, Will Crooks, M.P., with tears streaming down his cheeks, superintending the pathetic work.

Two bombs had dropped upon an infant school, and these were the spoils of the ignoble war upon innocent civilians. As a fact, the same raider, after

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dropping the bomb intended for our large outstanding building, had deposited one upon a Catholic school a short distance away, but in this case happily without casualties.

After this experience we arranged the basement of the building as a shelter for the residents around us, and when alarms came were able to accommodate some 1,500 persons.

It is remarkable that although the Society had so many establishments around the coasts, only one suffered damage from raids. This was at Ramsgate, where the fine Sailors' Home was largely wrecked when a dump of ammunition was exploded on the Mole by an enemy bomb, and shattered the windows, doors, and roof by the shock.



## CHAPTER XVI

### 'IN SERVICE FOR THE SAILOR'

*'In war time everyone loves the sailor.'*

G. THOMAS.

AT the approach of Christmas, 1916, the Assistant Secretary and I waited on Lord Burnham, the kindly proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*, with a request that he would make an appeal to the public for funds to enable us to send to every British seaman of both the Royal and Mercantile Navies a pound of Christmas pudding upon that day. Lord Burnham very readily agreed, but stipulated that another newspaper should join in the application to the public. Consequently we crossed the road and at the office of the *Daily News* were just as kindly received; the appeal was made and most cordially responded to. A contract was made with Messrs. Lyons for several tons of this delicacy made up in hermetically sealed eight-pound tins, which by aid of the Admiralty, Board of Trade, Trinity House, as well as by favour of railway companies and carrying firms were duly distributed, to the great enjoyment of British sailors all over the world.

The same procedure was put into execution the following year, as it also would have been at Christmas, 1918, but that happily the Armistice rendered it unnecessary.

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Another outstanding event was a journey to Dunfermline, where with Admiral Sir George King-Hall and myself as speakers, and under the chairmanship of the Scottish Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir F. Tower Hamilton (soon to fall on active service), a new Rest, thoroughly equipped with restaurant and recreation bar, bed, bath, and quiet rooms, was opened for the special use of the Light Cruiser Squadron, which, when in port, moored close by.

Other similar buildings were provided by the Society at Harwich, Buncrana, Preston, Dartmouth, Gosport, Bristol, Avonmouth, Barry Dock, Poole, and in many other places where there were temporary naval bases ; and in every way this ancient organization rose magnificently to the rôle of almoner of the generously supplied funds contributed for helping the gallant men, who in very truth were standing between the nation and actual starvation.

The Society's operations in London were much embarrassed at this time, due to the fact that the large number of Royal Naval Reserve men who had been withdrawn from British ships to join the senior service had necessitated many shipowners to temporarily engage coloured men from the West Indies to replace the former.

Large numbers of these coloured men were then in London with unusually well-filled pockets ; these crowded into our two principal Homes (we were

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in possession of the German Sailors' Home in addition to 'Jack's Palace'), leaving no room for the white men, who naturally deeply resented being turned away.

Moreover, these coloured men, who dressed well, were associating with white women of the lowest class, accentuating an evil sufficiently in evidence before their arrival.

This matter, when it became acute, was reported to sympathetic ears at Whitehall, and as the report synchronized with a need for dock labour at Calais and Boulogne, our coloured clients were brought together in the great hall one day and forthwith recruited to a man, put into uniform, and sent across to the Channel ports to unload munition- and food-carrying ships, which were discharged there.

Thereafter, at very considerable expense, the Society bought the lease of a large common lodging-house near by, reconditioned it and equipped it in good style, especially for men of colour. It was opened with some ceremony by Rear-Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey, at that time one of the Sea Lords of the Admiralty, with the Mayors of the surrounding municipalities, clergy, etc. It met a very real need, while there was, subsequent to its establishment, no necessity for either white or coloured men to complain.

While I was engaged in appointing a staff to this

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new Rest we learned that the mother of the gallant boy, Jack Cornwell, V.C., was in extreme want, with a sick husband. Considerable sums had been collected by a Committee with the ostensible object of commemorating his memory by causing an oil-painting of the boy at his gun to be made, and to place a monument over his grave. Meantime both his family and his grave were neglected. We were able to provide the mother with regular employment at the Coloured Men's Rest, while the Society had the grave made up, and a temporary oaken cross with a brass plate describing his valorous deed was placed upon it, where it remained until the monument was ready.

My intimate knowledge of several of the West Indian Islands, from whence our troublesome coloured clients hailed, came in very useful in confounding the not negligible number of impostors who were frequently found putting forward stories for profit, which would possibly have been believed by those with no knowledge of the men and the localities from which they came ; and many of the scamps were dumbfounded when they were countered by my acquaintance with the towns and ports where they had spent the greater part of their lives.

Later, the India Office entrusted the Society with the repatriation of Indian natives, of whom there

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were some thousands in Britain, and financed the work which the officials so ably and readily carried out.

In his interesting book, *The Victory at Sea*, Rear-Admiral W. S. Sims, U.S. Navy, relates how he landed at Liverpool on April 9th, 1917 (the vessel having struck a mine as she approached the harbour). He arrived in London the next day, and in the afternoon I (with my colleague Mr. Sydney Lamb) renewed an old acquaintanceship with him dating back to my service at Whitehall, when he was a Commander, and also of his Aide, Lieut.-Commander J. V. Babcock, who had acted in the same capacity to the Commodore who, in 1912, had brought a Squadron to Gravesend which Miss Agnes Weston entertained.

My colleague and I had a proposition to make. It was that as the U.S. naval forces were to be based at Queenstown, Ireland, our Society should at once build a temporary Sailors' Home for the special accommodation of the men of his fleet.

Admiral Sims was gratified, but early as this was in his service on this side of the Atlantic, he had learned that his countrymen in Britain were prepared to find all the funds necessary to equip whatever buildings would be necessary for the U.S. seamen.

He was then staying at the Carlton Hotel, but in

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subsequent interviews we found him, with a continually expanding staff, either at the house of the Ambassador, Mr. W. H. Page, or in the very up-to-date offices at Grosvenor Place which were finally the head-quarters of the U.S. naval authority.

In the end the citizens of the United States resident here met all the requirements of their countrymen, at Queenstown and elsewhere, in the handsomest manner.

At the request of Mr. Lamb, Admiral Sims spoke from the Mansion House platform on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Society, with the Lord Mayor in the chair, and from his speech there the public learned for the first time that torpedo boat destroyers of the United States Navy were even then operating under the British Admiral in Ireland, putting down enemy submarines. Before making the announcement, which was received with great appreciation and applause by the very large assembly, the Admiral requested the representatives of the Press to lay down their pencils and to treat the matter as entirely confidential.

I noted Lieut.-Commander Babcock energetically tugging at the Admiral's coat-tails, mindful no doubt of a previous indiscretion in the same hall<sup>1</sup> which had resulted in his chief being censured by

<sup>1</sup> When he declared at a time of imminent war that 'blood was thicker than water'.

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his superiors some years before ; but the important news was blurted out notwithstanding.

Admiral Sims subsequently told me that in spite of his putting the reporters on their honour, his Aide was only just in time the next morning to prevent publication of this intelligence, when it was presented by one pressman to the naval censor at the R.U.S. Institution, Whitehall : he was justly much incensed. He said, 'The reporters in my country are pushing, but under similar circumstances I could have relied upon them absolutely.'

One interesting episode was the appointment by the Admiralty of a Committee to visit and report upon the equipment and resources of all the Sailors' Homes and Rests in the British Isles.

As this was a matter for which I was specially appointed, this Committee very naturally commenced by visiting the Society's head-quarters at 68o Commercial Road, and the subsidiary Rests in London. Admiral Robert Lowry, Paymaster-Captain W. Le Gegt Pullen, and Mr. R. E. Evans of the Admiralty, formed the Committee, and I accompanied them to Liverpool, Shields, Newcastle, Preston, Aberdeen, and other centres : a very considerable furbishing up of many establishments being the result, much to the advantage of those who used them.

It became clear that the association of the men

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of the R.N.R. and Mercantile Marine with the better disciplined R.N. men had had far-reaching results, and the latter were undoubtedly reaching out for better social surroundings in consequence of their new experiences.

To bring this to the notice of shipowners, ships’ officers, and others intimately connected with the sea and interested in the welfare of seamen of the Mercantile Marine, I wrote and submitted to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Wester-Wemyss, a couple of articles which were published in the *Nautical Magazine*. These, with that distinguished officer’s approval, set out the necessity for the future of maritime affairs, that thereafter there should be close co-operation between the officers and men of the two sea services.

Further, that the Admiralty should keep in close touch with the personnel of the Mercantile Navy, which in war becomes the Reserve of the fighting fleet. The doctrine was universally approved, but the exigencies of politics and the pressure from the Treasury for national economy have crushed the plan, because it must be financed by the State.

Throughout this period I was moving about the country from Aberdeen in the north to Falmouth in the south, pleading on various platforms the cause of the sailor, upon whose devotion to duty and contempt of imminent death depended the life of



## AFT—FROM THE HAWSEHOLE

the nation for food and other vital necessities. This brought one into touch with leaders of all varieties of thought, and side by side on the same platform with Bishops and prominent Nonconformist divines, Admirals, Peers, Peeresses, and hosts of influential women<sup>1</sup> and men in all the large towns and cities. It appeared no slight honour to speak in the Albert Hall, Central Hall at Westminster, in the City Temple, etc., and all this is a memory never to be effaced.

While these pages were in manuscript my old colleague wrote in regard to the welfare work initiated during the war, and of which he is now the Superintendent :

‘DEAR COMMANDER,

‘You will know, of course, that our beloved Prince of Wales, after whom the training Hostel is named, and who has taken so keen a personal interest in it, and all our work, has issued a special appeal, hoping to raise £50,000, and this we shall most assuredly require if we are to keep pace with all the needs which press upon us now : quite as much in regard to welfare as they did in the war.

‘Here is a brief précis of a day’s work, which, while it will be familiar to you from your old

<sup>1</sup> One of the most interesting of these was the late Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the American poetess, who accompanied me to a meeting at Hanwell, Middlesex.

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experience, will acquaint you with the fact that our labours do not lessen with the years.

‘In a year of Samaritan work we have given attention to 5,443 applications. Sifted, the result has been 70,254 free meals, 23,168 free beds, berths found for 1,604, help for 1,531 widows and 1,341 orphans, and we have 30 orphans under your own pet scheme totally maintained; 1,191 cash and other grants to individuals and families, and endless pension, injury, shipwreck, and repatriation, as well as other claims investigated.

‘Now for the day’s work.

‘The variety of claims upon us demands a deep understanding of humanity, coupled with the widest sympathies. The same hour holds the pathetic, heartbreaking consideration of the case of a suddenly bereaved widow with seven children, and the application of a mixed group of destitute coloured seamen from the Gold Coast or Somaliland. A letter asks us to find a missing son last heard of at Hong-Kong eighteen months ago. We found him!

‘The bell rings again and a High Commissioner is on the line asking us to take charge of a party of stranded men from his State until they join a ship, when he would like us to see them aboard. The police ring up that they have a man picked up in the street apparently drugged and robbed. Can we look after him? On arrival we at once identify the

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man to whom but a few hours before the advice was given "Leave your money with us". In the usual debonair way of the sailor he laughingly replies: "I can take care of myself. I have been here, there, and everywhere, and do not need a nurse." No amount of persuasion will get him to leave his hard-earned £60 with us. Now, here he is, helpless and destitute.

' India Office has some men on the doorstep for whom they seek our hospitality and co-operation. A party of Anglo-Indians "on the rocks" are left with us for months pending arrangements for their return to India, or for suitable arrangements to be made for berths.

' The Medical Officer of the London County Council 'phones: "Can I send my representative to see you about some destitute coloured seamen?" The Inspector reports that about 100 coloured seamen are housed in a common lodging-house in the vicinity and some are in an extremely exhausted condition. Immediate investigations follow and confirm the fact. Food is at once ordered and their wants relieved. Then investigation being set on foot 4,000 others similarly stranded in various ports of the United Kingdom are found and these, every one, were repatriated.

' So the tale runs on through the days, and we are ourselves surprised to discover that our records

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show the interesting and instructive details given above.

‘Thus you see we are still loyally at work for God and “in service for the sailor”.

‘Very sincerely,

‘G. F. DEMPSTER.’

Circumstances occurred in the latter end of 1918 which caused me to sever my connexion with this splendid old Society, and I was then for some months employed as a delegate lecturer of the War Savings Committee, with special duties to the Merchant Service, and here, under the strong lead of Sir Robert Kindersley, there was as keen a loyalty to the Empire and a will to win the war as existed anywhere.

While with this Society I had frequent occasion to visit the Admiralty and see the Sea Lords in regard to our operations : all of whom were interested and keen to help. Sir Cecil Burney, Admiral Lionel Halsey, and both Lord Jellicoe and his successor, Lord Wester-Wemyss, particularly, both of the latter pleading for us at meetings at the Albert Hall and elsewhere.

I took the opportunity at one of these interviews with the First Lord, Lord Jellicoe, to ask his assistance in adjusting a delicate matter which adversely affected commissioned warrant and warrant officers.

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When these were included in lists for the award of honours from our Allies, it was irritating to find that because there is no real corresponding rank in foreign navies (except that of the United States) they were given the same medals as ratings received ; while officers, from Sub-Lieutenants to Cadets with whom they ranked, or who were junior to them, were awarded the insignia of Orders. His lordship, with great kindness, caused information to be afforded which, in most cases, corrected this inequality.

## CHAPTER XVII HARBOUR DUTIES

*'Men my brothers, men the workers,  
Ever reaping something new ;  
That which they have done but earnest  
Of the things that they shall do.'*

TENNYSON.

ON 11th November, 1918, with a colleague, also late of the Sailors' Society (Mr. Sydney Lamb), I was in Fleet Street at 10.30 a.m., which was then normal. At 11 there was a short service in the office at Salisbury Square as the maroon sounded to inform the public an Armistice had been declared.

At 11.15 we again emerged into Fleet Street to find every window arrayed with flags or coloured cloths and the street full of joyous throngs, where all ranks fraternized. My friend and I entered St. Bride's Church for a moment of thanksgiving for the blessing of peace, and then came out to see the wonderful demonstration.

A large lorry was being drawn by a score of men and women. Among them was a Colonel, and a Captain, several private soldiers, and civilian men and women, while the lorry was similarly loaded. This was typical of what could be seen in every variety of vehicle from St. Paul's to Charing Cross.

Outside St. Paul's a vast multitude was collected which, alas, had no lead, and which produced a

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medley of song, sacred and secular. What a lost opportunity! Had a surpliced clergyman with a few choristers appeared on the steps, this immense crowd could have been brought into harmony and would have been formed into the most effective and devout demonstration of the momentous day, probably leaving memories ineffaceable while the lives of the participants last.

While employed with the War Savings Committee, I had to revisit Liverpool and other mercantile ports, and was thus able to renew several old acquaintances. But after some months in this service a pressing invitation reached me to join the outdoor staff of that splendid organization for the reclamation and care of British little ones, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, a work after my own heart: so, resigning from Sir Robert Kindersley's establishment, I went to Stepney.

The late Mr. Baker, who was Dr. Barnardo's successor, together with the Chairman of Council, Mr. McCall, met and instructed me in the special work they desired me to undertake. This again included visits to the great shipping centres, though prior to actually taking up the duty assigned me, Mr. Baker desired me to fully acquaint myself with the details of the Society's work in educating boys for entry into the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine respectively.

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To this end I was invited by Admiral Sir Harry Stileman, K.B.E., then the Superintendent of the Watts Naval Training Home at Elham, in Norfolk—a post he had held for some years prior to the war, and had but just returned to—to be his guest for a fortnight, so as to see at first-hand the system under which these fortunate youngsters were dealt with in this most excellent institution. The experience was amazing.

I had read of the institutional life which breeds boys of a type, in which so far as animal wants are concerned, and the needs of the body, a smattering of the Three R's, etc., full provision is made. There was all this at Elham, but, in addition, there was real home life and 'mothering' by all the female staff, while Lady Stileman was the inspiring and sympathetic head to whom alike staff and boys came, perfectly certain that all their troubles would be understandingly considered and kindly dealt with.

All the boys in rotation were welcomed in small numbers into the Admiral's rooms to tea, and he and his charming family, knowing intimately each lad, gave them such a cordial welcome and allowed them to share for a brief period their home circle, so as to remove all idea of the institutional life usually associated with this method of orphan education. The whole atmosphere was homely, and in school, games, and instruction, the efforts of all



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the staff, from the Admiral and the Chaplain down to the last subordinate, appeared to me to be inspired with the same desire of making their charges happy and fitting them for the battle of life. No wonder so many reach comparatively high service positions !

Thereafter, I was sent to the establishment at Poole, Dorset, where, on ground generously presented to Barnardo's Homes by the late Sir Russell Cotes of Bournemouth, a similar school was being organized under Commander Claude Hamilton, R.N.R., to prepare lads for a career in the Mercantile Marine.

The buildings then in use were temporary ones of wood, since replaced by substantial and permanent erections of brick, but even in its embryo state the model set by the Elham School was being most closely and loyally followed by Commander and Mrs. Hamilton : so that with some considerable experience of dealing with derelict children and orphans, I saw nothing in an extended visit which was not to be admired, and which will undeniably be for the highest interest and success in life of the youngsters who are fortunate enough to come under the inspiration which governs both these Homes. And what an immense influence for good these lads will have, after such a training, upon the R.N. or M.M. service into which they enter.

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Sir Russell Cotes invited me to meet him and discuss matters, and in his splendid home, which is now a free museum and picture gallery in Bournemouth, a most interesting conference took place, which resulted in some advantage to the organization.

I saw a great deal of the heavy inside work of this truly national undertaking, the happy care-free lives of the children, the methods which make them later on proud of, and full of affection for, their Alma Mater : while the up-to-date system of finance, the long service of members on the staff, and the kindness of the atmosphere in which they labour, all bear eloquent testimony to the greatness of the founder's ideals, and the loyalty with which these are adhered to by those who carry them on to-day.

Old Barnardo boys who have made good in the services and in civil life have no qualms or false pride about acknowledging what they owe the organization, and the names and ranks of some of these are the best possible illustration of the altruistic regime which radiates from Stepney Causeway. Many girls who were trained in Barnardo's Homes have also succeeded splendidly in life, and these, too, look back with affection to the place which was their home for so long.

My wife's health failing, I had to resign from this interesting post, and we gave up the house at Bromley, Kent, which we had rented during my

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London engagements, and bought a property at Wadhurst in Sussex, in the hope that in that beautiful county she would renew her normal powers. Here, although very closely occupied with journalistic business, and attending to the naval correspondence of the *British Legion Journal*, much other work had solely devolved upon me after the regretted death of Lieut.-Commander Holman in 1916.

For a plain sailor the list was fairly long, for there were four weekly and two monthly periodicals to serve, and one monthly magazine to edit entirely. My contributions to *The People* developed with the need of the times and the large share that the Sea Services of the Empire filled in the public mind in those eventful years ; so that before very long my correspondence with all ranks and ratings in the Navy, pensioners, and similar folk of the M.M. assumed formidable proportions : 400 letters in a week being a not unusual number, and this was maintained until the paper changed hands in 1920.

It has been a most gratifying experience to learn since, from many sources, of the general approbation those weekly articles have evoked, by claiming, on the one hand, strict adherence to the traditional sense of loyalty and duty to the Service on the part of officers and men ; and on the other, by plain speaking to authority, that many disabilities in remuneration and general treatment should not fall

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short of what is due to public servants upon whom depends the maintenance of Empire.

Men were serving their country in every lower-deck rating on wages admittedly inadequate in peace time prior to the war, and during this war unskilled labourers in sheltered posts on shore were remunerated at fancy wages, higher, in fact, than the salaries of naval officers commanding some of our fighting ships.

It was my duty to make this cruel neglect of decent treatment known to the public, while at the same time keeping always before those who thus suffered the necessity for upholding at all costs the high ideals which have made the British Navy the first in the world.

Without claiming to have been wholly responsible for the concessions which at last were made to put the officers and men on something like equality with corresponding folk on shore, it is clear from official letters, and the letters and other expressions of gratitude which have reached me from all ranks and ratings, that at least 'The Man Behind the Gun' contributed his quota to that result.

Pressing as was the work, the position made it possible to co-operate in the very vigorous 'United Laymen's Movement', which was exceedingly successful, and won the personal support of the resident landowner and surrounding residents of position.

We also, as my wife's health improved, initiated

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some successful amateur dramatic entertainments for charity, and shared in the establishing of a strong branch of the British Legion. So that retirement was not rustication, but very real work.

When the late Sir Doveton Sturdee was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet, I wrote to congratulate him, reminding him of our conversation some forty years before, referred to on page 114, and in reply he sent me the following letter, which, as it is typical of a most able and steadfast officer, I append :

Wargrave House.

‘DEAR CAPPER,

‘ I very much appreciated you kind letter of congratulation on my good fortune in being promoted. With reference to my past views on promotion : I, like others, at times, did not have a very promising outlook, and, on two occasions at least, a black one, but I joined the Service as a boy for the love of it, and was determined if possible to reach Flag rank—of course, due to lack of vacancies, many Admirals cannot get on the A. of F. list. Hence my good luck.

‘ I am very pleased to be able to remain on the active list for another five years, and I may be able to help the Service in some small way.

‘ With renewed thanks and all good wishes,

‘ Yours sincerely,

‘ F. C. D. STURDEE.

‘ *July 9th, 1921.*’

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After four years' residence at Wadhurst, during which we made some of the most real friendships of our lives with folk of sterling worth, whose kindness was past believing (one gentleman took the Vicar and me, both of us badly in need of a holiday, for a delightful week in the Lake District, a charming instance of thoughtfulness which lives in one's memory as an appreciated act of real goodness), we were, in the interests of health of some of our children, compelled to move to the breezy heights where these lines are written. Here, with the sea on three sides and with wide spaces around so that we are subject to every wind that blows, a true sailor's moorings has been found. But work is as plentiful as ever, and mainly in connexion with sailors, their needs, and their dependents still.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PLOTTING THE COURSE

*'How well in this appears—  
When service sweat for duty, not for need  
Thou art not for the fashion of these times  
When some will sweat for promotion,  
And having that do choke their service up.'*

*'AS YOU LIKE IT.'*

IT is said the British soldier carries a Field-Marshal's baton in his knapsack; the man-of-war's-man is not so fortunate. These pages chronicle the long struggle which has resulted in reopening for men 'entered at the hawsehole' opportunities to win H.M. commission, though the maximum rank available is but one step above that the author holds.

It has been shown that in the forty years of this effort, those who led at the onset sacrificed in the interests of the whole body of ratings from which they had emerged, the almost certain selection of themselves for advancement. This they did by suppression of their original appeal, substituting 'The Tree of Promotion', adoption of which by the Admiralty has resulted in improvement in the prospects and status of many thousands of ratings and their families, in the increase of classes of warrant officers, and the opening of commissions to most of these—restricted, it is true, as stated above.

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The social prestige of the Royal Navy was exceedingly high under Charles II, James II, William III, and Queen Anne—all autocrats, sometimes styled tyrants—yet (to adduce one instance only) it was with the King's personal approval that Cloudesley Shovel, a shoemaker's apprentice, afterwards ship's boy to Admiral Narborough (himself a Tarpaulin) was, for gallantry and valour, raised to commissioned rank, and rose to be Admiral and Commander-in-Chief.

Campbell<sup>1</sup> records that 'his courage and his sincerity were alike unquestionable, and he rose, not by mere self-assertiveness, but by vigilance . . . constancy, patience, and zeal for the public service'. This is honourable to the system under which the Royal Navy was then administered in days when the Crown was more directly responsible than is now commonly realized.

Shovel's name is mentioned, but he was but one in a long gallery of similar Tarpaulins, from the Leakes, father and son, Benbow, Lawson, Mings, Mitchell, Hopson, Rooke, and Captain James Cook, to mention but a few.

The traditions of the Royal Navy, based upon loyalty and a high sense of duty, would not be altered by the full restoration of the opportunities which were withdrawn in 1818, and which in the years

<sup>1</sup> Campbell's *Lives of the Admirals*, 1781, Vol. III, pp. 367-73.



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before had produced such men as those mentioned above.

The Gallantry Clause in the 'King's Regulations'<sup>1</sup> has been availed of in recent years to advance one ex-warrant officer to Captain on the active list. This action of the Admiralty is probably intended to encourage the young and ambitious aspirants for promotion both under that clause as well as those who aim at advancement through the Mate system. It should, however, be extended to embrace some of the capable and highly loyal officers direct from warrant rank, many of whom, handicapped by higher relative age, have no future beyond the rank of Lieutenant.

Taking a retrospective view, it is seen that the whole lower-deck personnel has moved up socially in the period of my own lifetime ; this evolution has been gradual, but continuous, advancing with changes in material things, from the sail and mast to the turbine-propelled ship, and from the ships of wood to those of iron and steel, as well subsequently to 'destroyers' and submarines. In matters of armament from the smooth-bore gun discharging a shot of 32 lb. to a more or less accurate distance of 800 yards, to weapons which are so powerful that they send projectiles of close upon a ton and a half in weight with wonderful accuracy to a distance of

<sup>1</sup> Clause introduced on Report of a Royal Commission in 1858.

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twenty miles : necessitating specially designed apparatus of a highly scientific character for pointing these weapons, for which the sighting methods, even when equipped with telescopes, are useless.

These vast changes in the great guns were accompanied by corresponding introductions of great numbers of mechanical and scientific instruments and appliances for controlling, spotting and sighting the guns, as well as in every other department of the ship's interior economy. Torpedoes too have advanced from the crude angle-towed Harvey, and the detonating cans of gun-cotton at the end of poles mounted in boats, to self-propelling Whiteheads capable of running correctly at high speeds to a target six miles away.

All this evolution of material connoted the necessity of crews of a much higher mentality than in the days of boarding pike and cutlass, and splendidly have the men risen to the need. Their higher standard of education and knowledge compelled a drastic modification of the discipline of past eras, and dealing with them on the basis of reasonable thinking beings ; and this the Admiralty undoubtedly have, with much wisdom, accomplished.

The men of to-day fully appreciate these changes (which include a more appropriate rate of pay, free uniform, better victualling, and amenities of sport

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and living): in fact, the free acknowledgement of  
their manhood.

As to reforms conceded: it will be seen from  
'The Tree of Promotion'<sup>1</sup> we started without  
possibility of officer's rank for 60 per cent of the  
men, while of the 40 eligible 1·7 per cent only  
could reach the quarter-deck, and none H.M. com-  
mission. To-day (with the exception of some 700  
ratings, and these may now attain that of chief petty  
officer, denied them in 1882), every lower-deck class  
has an avenue open to the quarter-deck, and the  
major number to commissions.

Also the warrant classes, in 1882, were only three  
in number; they now comprise fifteen, and nearly  
all are eligible for commissions. Thus not only has  
'The Tree of Promotion' been implemented, it has  
been largely improved upon, and their lordships  
have given much more than was originally asked for.

Yet it remains for the class which has in the main  
been the leaders in this beneficent evolution still to  
win equality with their opposite numbers in the  
Army, so that for the few suitable men, who approve  
themselves by their conduct and performance for  
advancement, there may be opened the possibility  
for promotion right up to Flag rank, for if the Army  
can produce men suitable, it is certain the Navy can  
also.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* page 129.

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The suggestion that we shall yet see under the House of Windsor such unlimited hopes of promotion as were practised and considered just in the Royal Navy of the Stuarts, is not an innovation, but a revival, which if the reader doubts let him study the inscription Queen Anne caused to be placed on the memorial she provided for her Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovel in Westminster Abbey :

‘ These honours were the just rewards for long and faithful service, of a character which earned the esteem even of our Country’s foes ; while they dreaded him.

‘ This monument was erected by his Sovereign to commemorate the extraordinary virtues of one whose life was a worthy example to all seamen of the Nation.’

There are not less able men to-day who enter by the hawsehole. I plead on the one hand that Authority may not disdain to learn from the past : and on the other that the men should study naval history and emulate the qualities of some of their great predecessors of humble origin who rose through their ‘ constancy, zeal, and loyalty ’. The Navy will be the richer for utilizing the best brains of its own personnel, while the cream of these will be heartened and encouraged by such larger possibilities ahead.

It would be unfair to close this retrospective chapter without chronicling the fact that the ancient society which has so manfully battled for the interests of officers and men was not, in later years,

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alone in this work, for the Engineers formed a society in the 'sixties of the last century which had far-reaching effects upon their status, the B.M.A. acted for the Medical Branch, and there were others.

Then on the lower deck, the engine-room artificers and the stokers were the first to copy the warrant officers, and since 1890 practically all lower-deck branches have instituted each their own Benefit Societies. These elect delegates which form in each naval port a Local Joint Committee, which consider and consolidate the claims to be put forward for redress of disabilities.

The Admiralty has for years turned a kindly eye upon these movements, and utilized them most wisely in connexion with a general Welfare Committee, set up since the war: this, with the aid of officers appointed in *liaison*, is in touch with the Board providing a sifted list of requests representing the wishes of the men.

With wisdom which has since abundantly justified the startling innovation, Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe, when Admiralissimo of the Grand Fleet, entrusted to representatives of the men a great sum of money sent to him for benevolent work among the men and their families.

So well did they handle the matter, and so business-like their work, that immense sums have since been entrusted to this body (now incorporated as

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the R.N. Benevolent Trust), which, assisted by officers, though the practical work is all done by the men, has now the administration of an income over £70,000 annually, accruing from investments (£198,206) and contributions from canteen profits. With these great funds they maintain orphanages, training schools, and convalescent homes, and in every way indicate their capacity to discharge any fiduciary and financial responsibility which may arise.

This is indeed an evolution from the brawling, intemperate, and socially outcast sailor of my early days ; and before I lay down my pen I will confess that among the many gratifications of the evening of life is the knowledge of having shared in a humble way in the practical regeneration which all the facts above referred to imply, in the life, prospects and outlook of British seamen.

The great advance can be best measured by the present cordial co-operation between officers and men. Sixty years ago the Navy was ruled by fear. The officers' corps was a body entirely apart from the men. True, the days when the midshipman of thirteen years of age carried a rattan (and beat at will seamen old enough to be his grandfather) are past and forgotten, yet even in 1869 there was still much brutality and harshness.

The *camaraderie* and mutual support of officers,

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with the comparatively well-educated ratings of to-day, conduces to the existence of a Fleet which (in spite of the fear of some that education would sap courage) is not, as 1914-18 proved, one whit inferior in bravery, ability, and in the supreme naval virtues of zeal, loyalty and devotion to the flag, than was that in the gloriously historic days from Drake and Grenville onward.

It so happened that in my early childhood the remembrance of drunken seamen on leave, misusing their liberty, as already described, made so painful an impression upon me that I have worked all my life for temperance : so I feel I may justly rejoice over these results. Yet it would be unfair to the Service if I did not suggest to the reader on shore to look farther back and remember that all ranks and ratings have the example and inspiration of the many wars in which England was saved by its Fleet.

We have, too, the memory and example of the Elizabethan seamen and their proud and gallant definition of their duty to be loyal subjects of :

‘unconquered courage and aspiring minds : that dare fight with fortune, fly in the face of all foreign enemies, and daunt the pride of all false-hearted people whatsoever’.

Further, with regard to officers from the lower deck : their unswerving loyalty, high sense of discipline and devotion to duty has been a known

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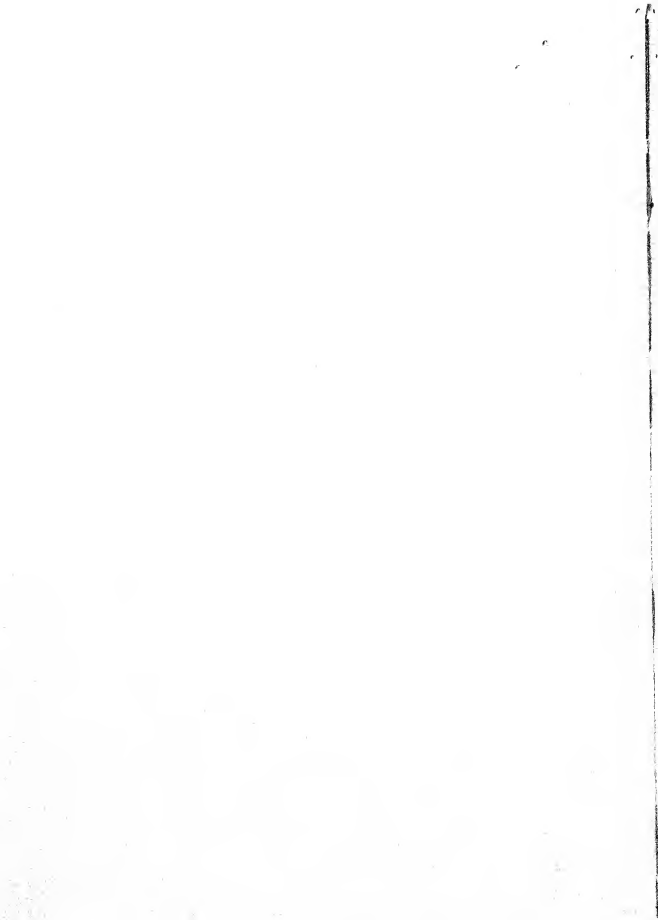
characteristic of their class, so the fact of their starting at the foot of the ladder should not necessarily entail the impossibility of suitable men reaching thence to Flag rank.

Nevertheless that this hope is still unrealized should be no cause for discouragement in view of the solid progress made in my own Service experience. Success depends upon merit displayed and upon ability and zeal exercised ; and just as the existing, relatively high, position has been achieved in the past generation, so progressive opportunities will certainly be granted to those who show their fitness to seize and avail themselves of them. Not selfishly, remembering only their personal advancement, but the final and ultimate good of that Service the watchwords of which have ever been :

DUTY, LOYALTY, AND PATRIOTISM.

GOD SAVE THE KING !





## APPENDIX

### A.—PAY OF LOWER-DECK RATINGS: ALSO OFFICERS THEREFROM

1869.	Per diem.	1927.	Per diem.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Boy, 1st Class	0 6	Boy, 1st Class	— 1 9
Ordinary Seaman	1 3	Ordinary Sea-	— 2 9
		man	
Able Seaman	1 7	Able Seaman	4 0 to 4 6
Stoker	2 0	Stoker	3 3 to 5 0
Leading Rate	1 9	Leading Rate	5 3 to 5 6
Petty Officer	2 2	Petty Officer	7 0 to 7 8
Stoker Petty Officer	2 5	Stoker Petty	
		Officer	7 6 to 8 2
Chief Petty Officer	2 5	Chief Petty	
		Officer	8 6 to 10 0
Chief Stoker	4 6	Chief Stoker	9 0 to 10 6

Ratings then paid for, and maintained, their uniform. There was no marriage allowance.

Ratings have a free kit, and an annual upkeep contribution. Men above 25 who are married have also a marriage allowance.

### OFFICERS EX LOWER DECK

	s. s.		s. s.
Warrant Officers	4 to 7	Warrant Officers	14 to 17
Chief W.O.'s	9 0	Nil	
Nil		Commissioned	
		Officers from	
Lieutenants	Nil	Warrant Rank	19 to 25
Lieutenant-		Lieutenants	27 to 29
Commanders	Nil	Lieutenant-	
Commanders	Nil	Commanders	31 to 35
		Commanders	40 to 64

Officers of mechanical branches receive an addition of 1s. per diem.

B.—NAVAL VICTUALLING  
FOOD SCALE FOR LOWER-DECK RATINGS, 1869

	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Supper</i>
Monday	One pint of cocon, 6½ ounces biscuit	One pound of salt pork, 7 ounces of biscuit, one pint pea soup	One pint of tea, 6½ ounces biscuit
Tuesday	Ditto	One pound of salt beef, ½ pound plum duff, 7 ounces of biscuit	Ditto
Wednesday	Ditto	As on Monday	Ditto
Thursday	Ditto	¾ pound preserved fresh beef, 2 ounces dried potatoes, 7 ounces biscuit	Ditto
Friday	Ditto	As on Monday	Ditto
Saturday	Ditto	As on Tuesday	Ditto
Sunday	Ditto	As on Monday	Ditto

Vinegar, mustard and pepper were supplied; salt was obtained by washing the brine in which pork and beef were pickled, and crushing the rock salt. Pea soup was simply split peas stewed in water and a modicum of caraway seeds added.

Only tin kettles and dishes, with one iron spoon per man, were supplied: all other mess table utensils were purchased by the men.

Supper at 5.30 p.m. and breakfast at 7.15 a.m., with two night watches between, was the most trying time.

In harbour, generally two days per week, fresh beef 1 lb., vegetables ½ lb., with 1 oz. oatmeal to stew with the meat for soup was substituted; also soft bread, 1½ lb., was similarly substituted for biscuit.

# APPENDIX

## NAVAL VICTUALLING SCALE AT A NAVAL DEPOT, 1927

	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Tea</i>	<i>Supper</i>
Monday	Tea, bread and butter, smoked haddocks	Pea soup, roast beef and potatoes, Yorkshire pud- ding, oranges	Tea, bread and but- ter, jam	Cocoa, bread and butter, liver and onions
Tuesday	Tea, bread and butter, mutton chops and tomato sauce	Pea soup, steak and kid- ney pie, potatoes and swedes, baked apple and custard	Tea, bread and but- ter, winkles	Coffee, bread and butter, corned brisket with pickles
Wednesday	Tea, bread and butter, fried whiting	Kidney soup, roast beef and potatoes, haricot beans, Windsor pud- ding	Tea, bread and but- ter, compo of fruit	Cocoa, bread and butter, tripe and onions
Thursday	Tea, bread and butter, pork sausages and mash potatoes	Pea soup, roast mutton and potatoes, onions, mint sauce, rice pudding	Tea, bread and but- ter, kippers	Cocoa, bread and butter, cheese and sauce
Friday	Tea, bread and butter, steak and chip po- tatoes	Vegetable soup, steak pud- ding, potatoes and par- snips, blanchmange and jam	Tea, bread and but- ter, currant bread	Cocoa, bread and butter, haricot mutton
Saturday	Tea, bread and butter, fried cod	Pea soup, pork sausages, potatoes and onions, apples	Tea, bread and but- ter, marmalade	Cocoa, bread and butter, pork brawn
Sunday	Tea, bread and butter, bacon and eggs	Pea soup, roast pork, po- tatoes, sage and onions, parsnips, blackberry and apple tart	Tea, bread and but- ter, plum cake	Coffee, bread and butter, cold ham with beetroot

All these foods are prepared by qualified cooks, and not by the men themselves, as in earlier years :  
pea soup as well as other soups being made with suitable ' stock '.

## APPENDIX

### C:—LORD FISHER ON PROMOTION OF MEN EX LOWER DECK.

(*Vide* page 175.)

Kilverstone, 3 July, 1910.

DEAR CAPPER,—

Thanks for your letter just received, which has given me very great pleasure.

Yes certainly, put my portrait into your *Manual* if you wish. I have always done my utmost for the Warrant Officers as you know well. I know their splendid value and their unswerving loyalty. They are worthy of a far larger number of Lieutenant commissions than they now possess and should be eligible for Commander's rank. I hope it will come before an undesirable agitation compels it. The agitation won't come from inside the Service but will be irresistible from without, and other things will come with it perhaps. 'A stitch in time saves nine.'

Yours truly,

FISHER.

P.S.—Kindly convey to your brother officers my unfailing interest in them, and my cordial sympathy.

F.

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